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ABSTRACT

The extent to which vocational education and training (VET) policy is nurturing lifelong learning in Sweden was examined through a review of recent policy documents issued by various Swedish government agencies and data from comparative studies compiled by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Adult Literacy Survey. The review focused on the following items: (1) VET policy and the structural framework of Sweden's VET system; (2) support measures to promote participation and access, modes of delivery, and actors; and (3) curricular development, learning strategies, and methodology. The study established that Sweden is making a large public investment in VET, with VET and general education functioning as parts of an integrated system that has been highly decentralized since 1991. Extensive examples of lifelong learning policy within Sweden's educational system were identified. Swedish policy was actively supporting a lifelong learning perspective for VET, and Sweden appeared to be moving toward a genuine system for lifelong learning. (Sixteen

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tables/figures are included. The following items are appended: list of social partners involved in the knowledge week; tables detailing integration of the Adult Education Initiative with upper-secondary education for adults between 1997 and 1999; and list of pertinent legal provisions. The bibliography contains 42 references.) (MN)

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PANORAMA

Lifelong learning in Sweden

The extent to which vocational education and training policy is nurturing lifelong learning in Sweden

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Lifelong learning in Sweden

The extent to which vocational education and training policy is nurturing lifelong learning in Sweden

Ann Kristin Boström
Emmanuel Boudard
Petroula Siminou

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Original language version

Cedefop Introduction

1996 was the European Year of Lifelong Learning, which raised awareness of the creation and promotion of 'lifelong learning for all'. This was also the title of an influential OECD publication the same year. Since then, lifelong learning has been prominent on most education and training policy and conference agendas in Europe and much debate generated on it. Since then, there has been scope to put some of the theory into practice. Cedefop is now setting up a reporting system on developments in lifelong learning, in the Electronic Training Village (ETV) (www.trainingvillage.gr), in order to monitor progress.

The reporting system will concentrate on delivering up-to-date information on developments, initiatives and research. In addition, there will be reports on the implementation of lifelong learning in systems of vocational education and training (VET) in selected countries. In summer 2000, studies were launched on the extent to which vocational education and training policies and actions nurture lifelong learning in four countries, Finland, Italy, The Netherlands, and Sweden.

Developing a 'system' that supports lifelong learning implies establishing links between a number of highly diversified learning areas, thus opening up the opportunities for combinations and synergies not possible in one institutional setting. If supportive policies are being seriously implemented, there must be some evidence that learning is starting to spread over the lifespan. Learning that takes place intentionally and unintentionally at work, at home or during leisure-time, must be acknowledged for its worth both to the individual and to the organisation. Policies should respond to the biggest problem or challenge which is that of giving all people a fair chance, and equal opportunities and access to learning throughout their lives, and not allow lifelong learning to become a mechanism that 'reproduces inequalities'.

This report assesses the extent to which such lifelong learning strategies are being implemented in VET in Sweden. It examines implementation and the results achieved from a number of angles: the specific national context being addressed by policy, as well as its focus; the learning areas and structures implicated; the instruments and pedagogical methods used; the actors involved.

With the publication of its Memorandum on Lifelong learning, the European Commission has placed this issue among its priorities. Cedefop is fully aware that its field of interest, vocational education and training, is merely one facet of lifelong learning, which according to the memorandum has become the guiding principle for provision and participation in all learning contexts. Nevertheless, we hope this report will make a useful contribution to the debate and consultation process launched in the Member States as a follow-up to the memorandum.

We would like to thank, Ann Kristin Boström, Emmanuel Boudard and Petroula Siminou at the Institute of International Education, who prepared the report.

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Deputy Director

Martina Ní Cheallaigh
Project Manager

Glossary of acronyms, abbreviations and terms

ABF	*Arbetarnas bildningsförbund*
	The Workers' Educational Association WEA
AEI	*Kunskapslyftet*
	The Adult Education Initiative
ALU	*Arbetslivsutveckling*
	Employment development programmes (of introductory character)
AMI	*Arbetsmarknadsinstitutet*
	Employability institute (under Swedish National Labour Market Administration responsible for skill assessment, vocational guidance, job placement and special measures for adults with functional impairments)
AMS	*Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen*
	Swedish National Labour Market Board; www.ams.se/amv_orgeng.htm
AMU - AMUgruppen	*Arbetsmarknadsutbildning*
	Labour Market Training Agency
AMV	*Arbetsmarknadsverket*
	Swedish National Labour Market Administration
APU	*Arbetsplatsförlagd utbildning*
	Workplace learning modules at upper secondary level
CSN	*Centrala Studiestödsnämnden*
	The National Board for Student Aid; www.csn.se
CVT	*Kontinuerlig yrkesutbildning*
	Continuing Vocational Training
EFA	*Expert gruppen för arbetsmarknadspolitiska utvärderingsstudier*
	Expert Group for Labour Market policy Evaluation?
Folkbidningsrådet	Swedish National Council for Adult Education
FS	*Frikyrkliga studieförbundet*
	Educational Association of Non-Conformist Churches in Sweden
FU	*Folkuniversitetet*
DISTUM DATUM	*Distansutbildningsmyndigheten* – IT based distance education projects
	The Swedish Agency for Distance Education; www.distum.se
IFAU	*Institutet för arbetsmarknadspolitisk utvärdering*
	Office of Labour Market Policy Evaluation; www.ifau.se
IT- ICT	Information Technology- Information and Communication Technology
IV	*Det individuella programmet*
	Individual programme (for students with difficulties at upper secondary level)

KFUK/M	*Kristliga Föreningen Unga Kvinnor/Män* The YWCA/YMCA Adult Education Association
KOMVUX	*Kommunal vuxenutbildning* Municipal adult education
KY (AVE)	*Kvalificerad yrkesutbuildning* Advanced Vocational Education also called Qualified Vocational Education (AVE); *www.ky.gov.se*
IALS	The International Adult Literacy Survey
LO	*Landsorganisationen* Swedish Trade Union Confederation
LR	The National Swedish Federation of Teachers
Mbsk	*Studieförbudet Medborgarskolan* The Citizens` Adult Educational Association
NBV	*Nykterhetsrörelsens bildningsverksamhet* Temperance Movements' Educational Association
NIDE	National Institute for Distance Education; *www.norrk.ssv.se*
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RRV	*Riksrevisionsverket* Swedish National Audit Office
SACO	*Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation* Swedish Assóciation of Professional Associations
SAF	*Svenska arbetsgivareföreningen* Swedish Employers' Confederation
SÄRVUX	Adult education for people with mental disabilities
SCB	*Statiatiska Centralbyrån; www.scb.se* Statistics Sweden (National Agency for statistics and indicators, etc)
SEK- MSEK	*Svenska Kronor* Swedish Crowns, Million Swedish Crown
SFI	*Svenska för invandrare* Swedish for Immigrants
Sfr	*Studiefrämjandet* Study Promotion Association
SIF	Swedish Industrial Salaried Employees' Association
SISU	*Svenska idrottsrörelsens studieförbund* Swedish Sport Confederation Adult Educational Association
Skolvenkat	National Agency for Education
SKS	*Sveriges kyrkliga studieförbund* Swedish Christian Educational Association

SOU	*Sveriges offentliga utredningar* Official government reports
SSV	*Statens skolor för vuxna* National distance adult schools in *Hörnösand* and *Norrköping*
SV	*Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan* Adult Educational Association of Swedish Farmers' Union and the Centre and the Liberal Parties
SVUX	Adult study assistance
SVUXA	Special adult study assistance
TCO	*Tjänstemännens centralorganisation* Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees; www.tco.se
TBV	*Tjänstemännens bildningsförbund* The Educational Association of Professional Employees
UBS	Special grant for education and training
VET	*Yrkesutbildning* Vocational education and training

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1. Introduction

1.1. Scope and aim of the study

The aim of the report is to examine to which degree lifelong learning supportive policies and practices are implemented, particularly in the field of vocational education and training (VET) in Sweden. For this purpose a number of angles will be examined: the problems specific to the national context that need to be addressed by policy, which in turn influences its focus: the learning areas and structures implicated, the instruments used, the actors involved, and pedagogical methods used.

The objectives of the study are to examine thoroughly the recent changes in VET policies and practices in Sweden; to analyse the place and role of VET in a system for lifelong learning and explore what the characteristics of lifelong learning supportive policies are.

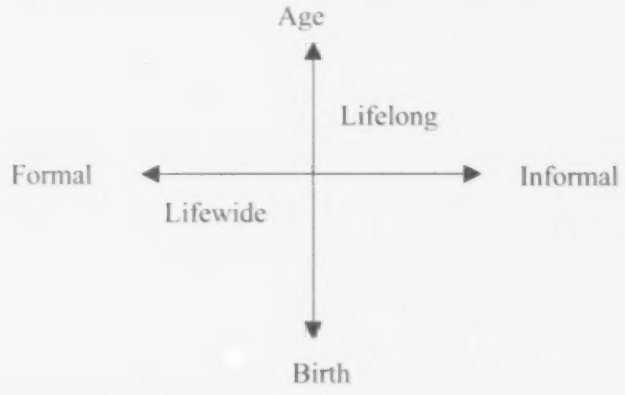
1.2. Education and training definitions

Definition of lifelong and lifewide learning

In a recent publication, the National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2000b, p. 7) has brought about its own definition of lifelong learning:

> 'lifelong learning is a holistic view of education and recognises learning from a number of different environments. The concept consists of two dimensions. The lifelong dimension indicating that the individual learns throughout a life-span. The lifewide dimension recognises formal, non-formal and informal learning'.

Graph 1: Conceptual framework for lifelong and lifewide learning



Source: Inspired by Skolverket (2000b, p. 19).

As knowledge needs continuous updating throughout life, the acquisition of knowledge tends to be a lifelong process – the lifelong dimension on the graph (see Graph 2). The lifewide dimension refers to the variety of learning environments: from formal education – the formal education system such as compulsory education and adult education – to non-formal education – education organised outside the education system such as labour market training,

in-service training and popular education – and informal learning – learning situations which are not formally organised such as reading a newspaper or participating in a conference.

Graph 2: Dimensions of lifelong learning: from formal to informal learning

Age
Lifelong

Formal education	*Non-formal education Labour market and workplace*	*Informal education Civil society*
Adult education	Labour market training	Voluntary civic association
Higher education	Workplace training	Learning society
Upper secondary education	In- service training	Learning organisation
	Competence Development	Family
Compulsory education	Polpular adult education	
Child care		

Formal to Informal, learning environment
Lifewide

Source: Adapted from Skolverket (2000b, p. 21).

This definition has many practical consequences. The first consequence is that lifelong learning dissolves the boundaries between policy sectors. Indeed, lifelong learning concerns such sectors as education policy, labour market policy, industrial policy as well as social policy. All partners are also involved, from municipalities to county councils and the government, and from employers to social partners and employees.

The second consequence is a shift in responsibility for education and learning from the public to the private and civil spheres. The traditional system of education run by the Ministry of Education will be 'dismantled' to a multitude of learning environments and actors.

The third consequence is a shift in responsibility from the State to the individual. The individual has to create its own curricula – find information and make use of it – and its motivation will drive its educational career. A system of lifelong learning has therefore to provide study guidance and counselling, individual study plans and implement many practical tools in order to guide both advantaged people according to their abilities and less advantaged people.

Sweden has no definite boundaries between vocational and general education. Barriers between both have disappeared leading to an integrated system, which makes it difficult to define VET (see Section 2.2.).

Adult education in Sweden encompasses municipal adult education and the adult education initiative (AEI) – which is municipal but State supported –, commercial training companies, study circles – organised by study associations – folk high school – run by various bodies such

as civil society organisations and counties – and in-service training. From the age of 20, Swedish citizens are entitled to adult education. According to the National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), the State school system for adults:

> 'includes municipal adult education (Komvux), adult education for those with learning difficulties (Särvux), Swedish language teaching for immigrants (SFI) and the National School for Adults (SSV)' (National Agency for Education, 2000).

1.3. Procedures, data sources, methodology and limitations

In order to reach their objectives for the study, the contractors conducted a literature review of the most recent policy documents (see the glossary, Annex 6.3 and the bibliography).

Sources of data include Statistics Sweden, the National Labour Market Board, the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Board of Student Aid, the Swedish Institute and the National Agency for Education.

Comparative studies compiled by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and data from the international adult literacy survey (IALS) covering 21 countries are used to explore new insights into Sweden's overall ranking and the ways Swedes take part in lifelong learning (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000). Key stakeholders have been consulted (see acknowledgements for a complete list).

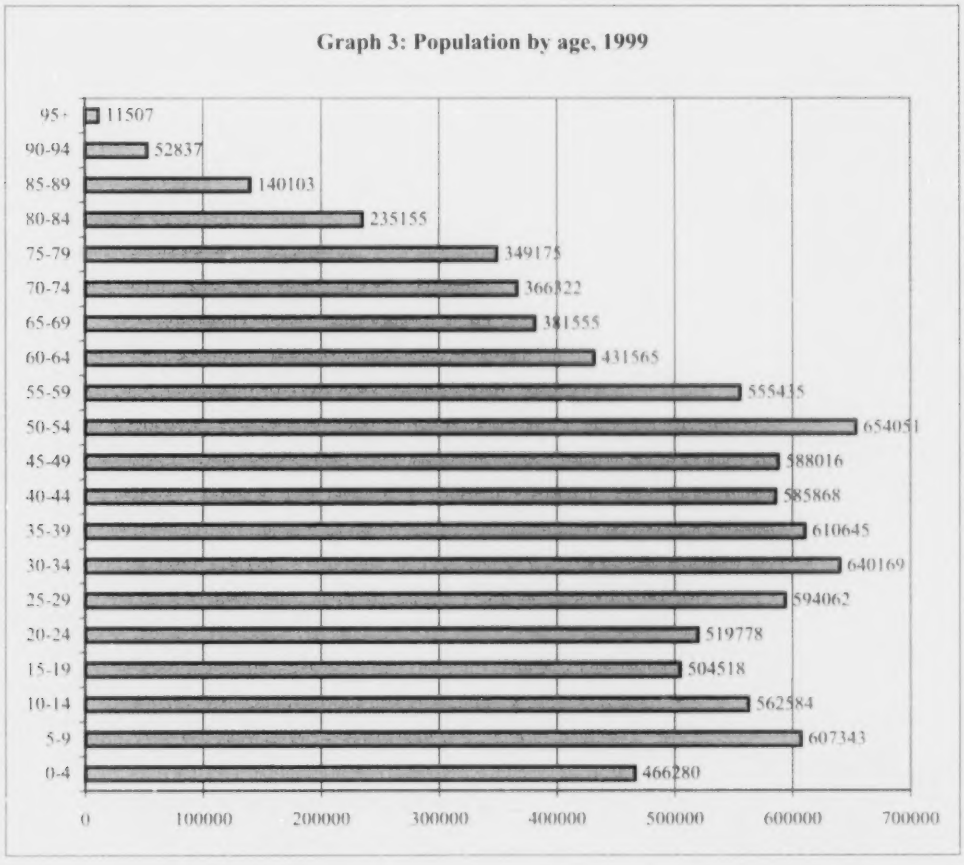
Due to the brief time available for this study, the many educational initiatives recently launched in Sweden and the amount of collected material, the contractors could not explore all subjects in depth. Hence this report does not offer a complete summary of the entire decentralised Swedish VET system. Pedagogical methods and practices have not been sufficiently explored either. Instead, recent policy initiatives – such as AEI, advanced vocational training (KY) and the knowledge week – are described. In order to highlight the complexity of the decentralised Swedish system, some practical examples are introduced to demonstrate various organisations of VET within the municipalities.

2. Policy and structural framework

All social partners and policy-makers emphasise that the driving force behind economic growth is the level of human capital. The educational system has therefore been at the centre of government policy for economic reforms for decades.

Sweden has an area of 450 000 km^2 and at 31 December 1999 (see Graph 6) a population of 8 861 426 Swedes, of which approximately 86 % live in the southern half of the country with concentrations in three major cities, Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö (Statistics Sweden, 2000).

Graph 3: Population by age, 1999



Source: SCB (2000).

The Swedish population is well educated as a result of large public investment. In the 1997 budget year, overall expenditure of national, local authority and county council education services amounted to 6.8% of GDP in youth education (OECD, 2000). According to the IALS([1]) survey,

([1]) The literacy score is measured according to three scales: prose, document and quantitative. Because of space limitation, the graphs and tables presented are all based on document literacy (for further information, see OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000, pp. ix-xv).

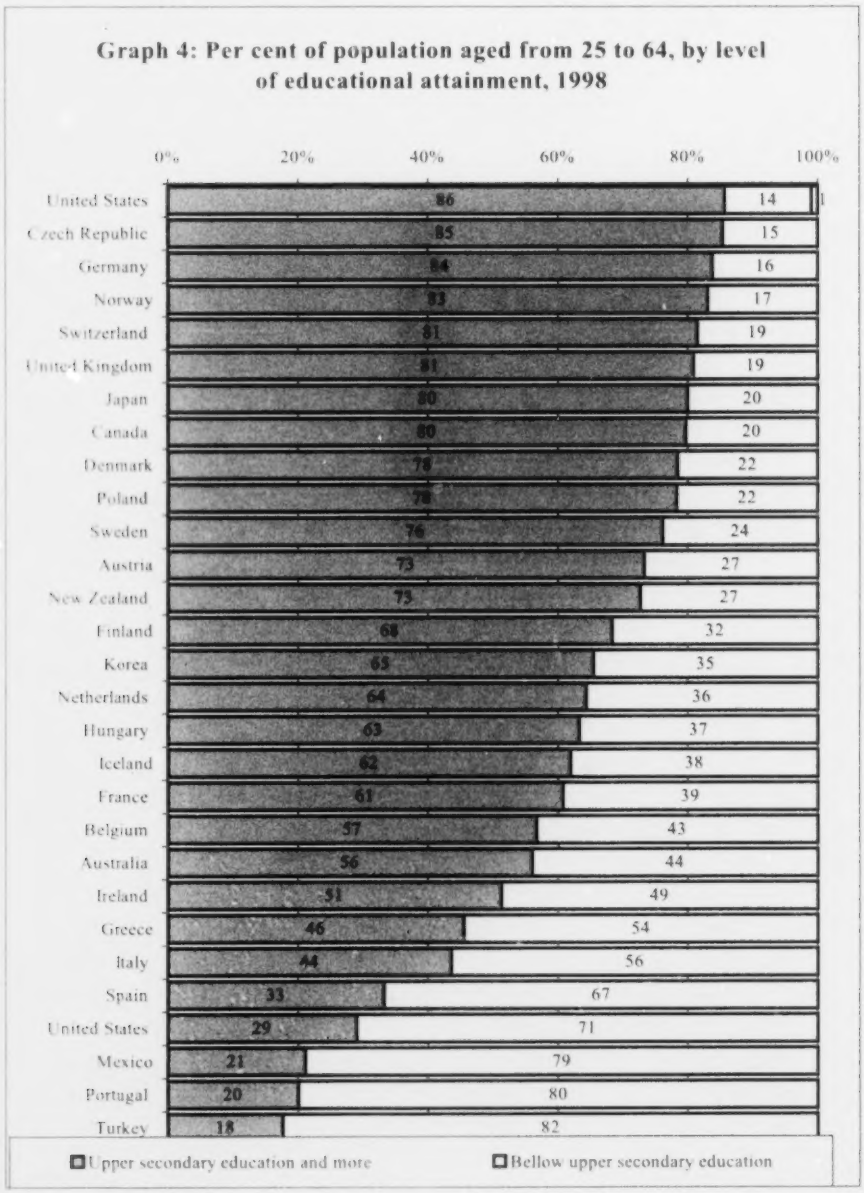
Swedes rank high in international comparisons of literacy proficiency. Three indicators support this observation:

(a) the overall level of literacy proficiency of the population is among the highest (see Graph 4);

(b) even when controlling for variation in upper secondary education – where Sweden scores average – Swedes retain their high position in literacy proficiency (see Graph 5);

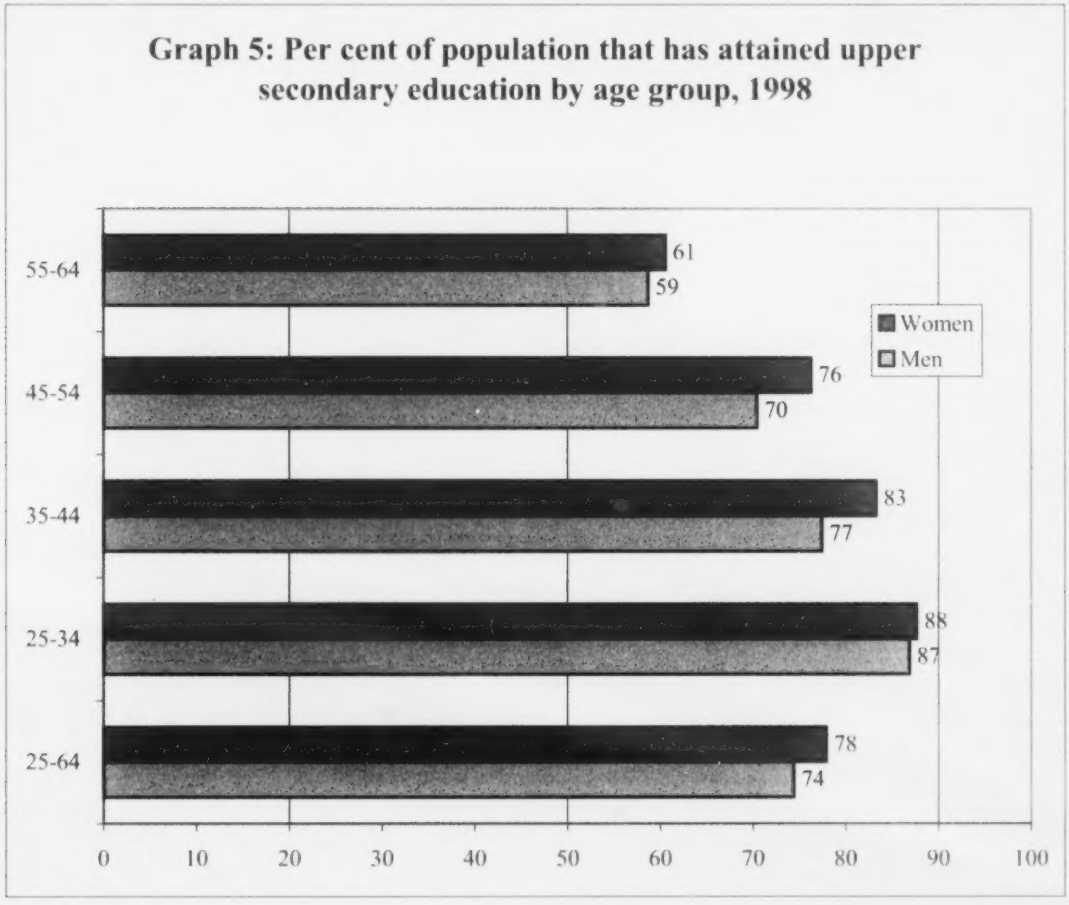
(c) the population without completed upper secondary education is among the more literate among the countries surveyed – their literacy proficiency is the same as that of populations with upper secondary education in some other countries (see Graph 6).

Graph 4: % of population aged from 25 to 64, by level of educational attainment, 1998



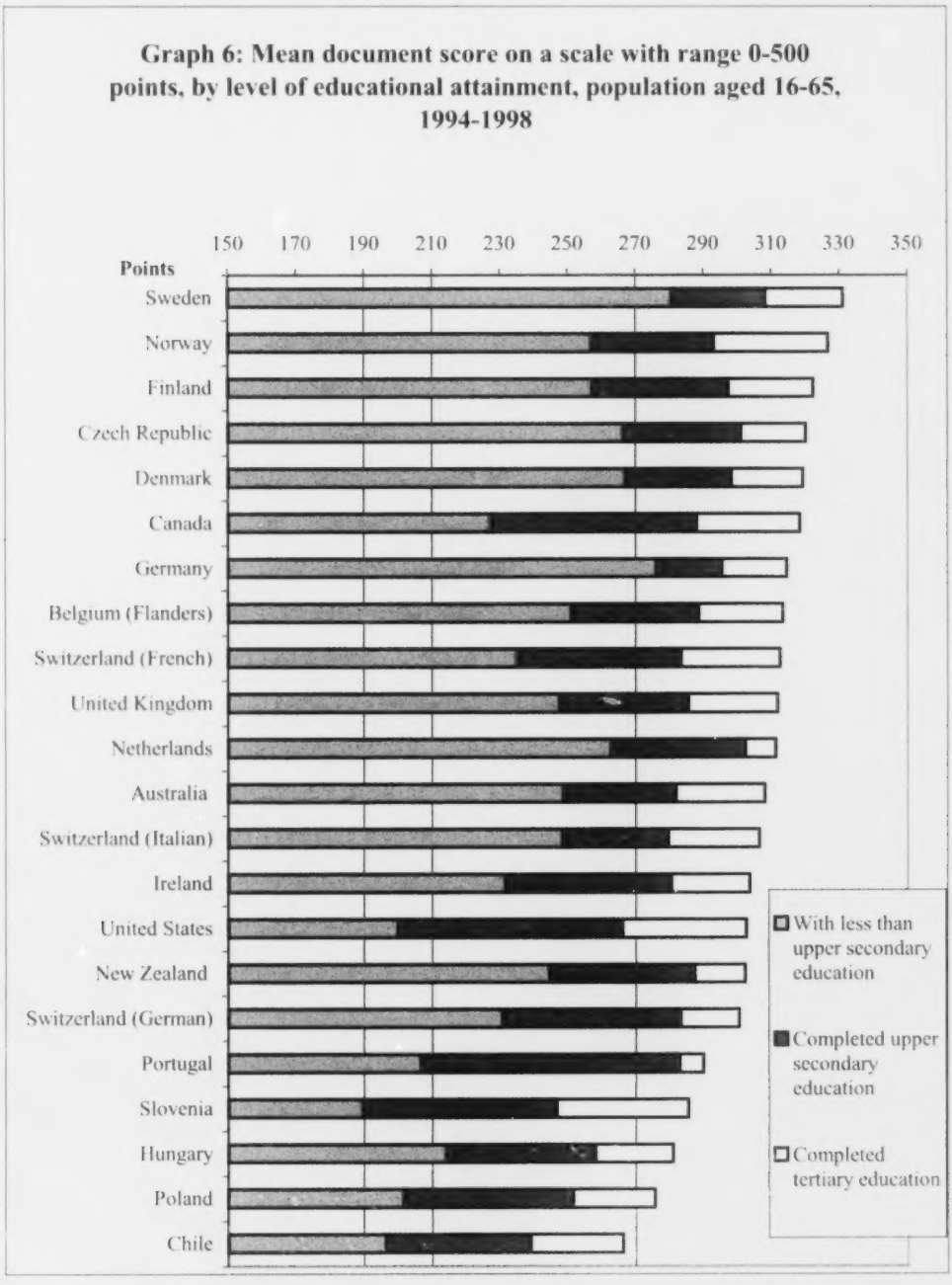
Source: OECD, 2000.

Graph 5: % of population that has attained upper secondary education by age group, 1998



Source: OECD (2000).

Graph 6: Mean document score on a scale with range 0-500 points, by level of educational attainment, population aged 16-65, 1994-98



Source: International Adult Literacy Survey, 1994-1998.

The Swedish labour market shows promising signs of employment growth and a concomitant reduction in unemployment, especially among young people aged 20 and 24 (see table 1a). It is unclear if the AEI has had a direct effect on the labour market situation because Sweden is experiencing an economic recovery – like other European countries. Sweden has a national goal of reaching an employment target of 80% by 2004. In order to reach this goal, 'people's knowledge and professional skills constitute one of the decisive factors in the maintenance of a high level of productivity growth in the Swedish economy' (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000, p. 4).

Table 1a: Unemployment in Sweden, 1990-2000([1])

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Unemployment rate	1.6	3.0	5.2	8.2	8.0	7.7	8.1	8.0	6.5	5.6 (August)
16-19 years	5.0	7.6	11.3	19.4	16.6	14.0	14.3	14.2	12.1	
20-24 years	3.1	6.2	11.5	18.1	16.8	15.7	16.1	15.7	11.8	
Unemployment rate among foreign born								17.5	14.8	12.8
Employment ratio[2]	83.1	81.0	77.3	72.6	71.5	72.2	71.6	70.7	71.5	

([1]) 1995 is shaded to mark the start of AEI.

([2]) The employment ratio is measured as the percentage of the population aged 16-64 years who are in regular employment. Those who are openly unemployed and persons enrolled in labour market policy programmes are reported as a percentage of the labour force.

Source: Labour force survey, Statistics Sweden (2000).

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Table 1b: Labour market policy and unemployment, 1992-98 (in thousands)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Employment with recruitment subsidies	13	9	25	21	12	4	0
Start-up grant	-	-	10	10	10	12	13
Relief work	16	14	17	14	8	7	1
ALU([1]) (working life introduction)	-	35	45	41	52	53	39
Substitutes for workers on training	8	10	13	11	10	4	0
Work place introduction	-	-	-	11	32	34	19
Public temporary work for older people	-	-	-	-	-	5	8
Youth training scheme	31	57	56	17	-	-	-
Activity centre	-	-	-	2	12	14	12
Municipal programme for young people	-	-	-	2	13	14	12
At a employability assessment institute	8	7	7	8	6	7	8
Labour market training (excluding in-plant training)	86	53	60	55	46	37	42
Subtotal labour policy measures	162	186	233	198	202	191	173
Labour market policy measures for the disabled	78	77	79	85	79	78	82
Unemployed (total)	**233**	**356**	**340**	**333**	**347**	**342**	**276**

([1]). See Section 2.8.2. on study assistance.

Source: Labour force survey, Statistics Sweden (2000).

2.1. Institutional responsibilities

2.1.1. Government

Since 1971, Sweden has had a one-chamber parliament (*Riksdag*), which is the highest decision-making body. The parliament is constituted by direct elections, which occur every fourth year (the last election was in 1998). The parliament has 349 members in proportion to the votes cast for them nationally. The Social Democrats have been in power since 1994 supported by the Left Party and the Green Party.

The parliament – which appoints the prime minister – and the government have the overall responsibility for the State-financed education system. The responsibility for VET is divided between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communication. A characteristic of the Swedish administrative system is the division of responsibility between the ministries and national agencies. Ministries are relatively small – the staff is approximately 150 people – and their responsibility is to prepare and process the government's bills and resolutions.

The administrative authorities within the educational field are the National Agency for Education, the Swedish Agency for Special Education, the National Agency for Higher Education and the National Agency for Services to Universities and University Colleges. Among these agencies, the most prominent is the National Agency for Education. The Swedish Agency for Special Education facilitates school attendance for students with a disability. The National Agency for Higher Education follows up and supervises university activities and the National Agency for Services assists with purchasing and student admissions. The national agencies have the responsibility for achievement of national objectives and for ensuring that regulations are applied correctly. The agencies take decisions on their own, in accordance with regulations and guidelines from both the parliament and the government.

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (*Folkbildningsrådet*) is in charge of the State fund for popular adult education, although it is not formally a State agency.

The National Agency for Education has the task of monitoring, evaluating and supporting quality assurance in schools and contributing to the development of schools. The agency also has a responsibility to coordinate research, train school principals and provide strategic support for the continuing education of teachers. National agencies submit annual reports and budget proposals to the government. They also provide the parliament and the government with reviews of the situation within their field of responsibility (Swedish Institute, 1998).

2.1.2. Local administration

The regional level of the government (see map below) is composed of 21 counties, which are responsible for Särvux – adult education for people with mental disabilities – and some folk high schools (see Section 2.3.5.).

Source: www.lf.se/overgripande/landstingskarta.htm (2000).

Counties:

1	Norrbotten
2	Västerbotten
3	Jämtland
4	Västernorrland
5	Dalarna
6	Gävleborg
7	Värmland
8	Örebro
9	Västmanland
10	Uppsala
11	Stockholm
12	Västra Götaland
13	Jönköping
14	Östergötland
15	Sörmland
16	Halland
17	Kronoberg
18	Blekinge
19	Kalmar
20	Gotland
21	Skåne

Studies in agriculture, forestry, horticulture and certain caring occupations, take place in schools run by the county councils.

The 288 municipalities receive a general State grant for education, which they disburse according to local decisions to the schools.

The municipalities are responsible for the implementation and development of educational activities within the school system. Sweden became a highly decentralised country after the 1991 Local Government Act, which gave the municipalities and county councils the option to implement their own organisational structures. Municipalities are required to lay down the general objectives for their schools in a school plan. They are also obliged to evaluate the school plan and, if required, submit the plan to the central authority – the National Agency for Education. The school plan sets out objectives and states what measures the municipal authority intends to implement to reach the objectives for education established at national level. In the local plan, the providers of education and training are to describe how the objectives are to be achieved and how the teaching is to be structured and organised (see Section 2.3.1. for further details).

2.1.3. School

Every school has to draw up a work plan based on the curriculum and local priorities, which are also followed up and evaluated. All municipalities and schools should evaluate their school plan annually, assessing their results in relation to the national goals.

Quality control is assured by three factors: goals and targets are fixed by the State – government and parliament –, their implementation is the responsibility of the municipalities and individual schools, under the supervision and assistance of the National Agency for Education.

Independent schools exist at all levels, but they are very few in Sweden, even though their number is increasing. During the school year 1999/2000, there were 73 independent upper secondary schools. Together these enrolled 2.8 % of the student body in upper secondary education (Skolverket, 1999c). They are funded in the same way as the normal public schools by the vouchers system (see Section 3.5. on financing schemes).

2.2. Policy principles regarding VET

2.2.1. The basic education principle

The basic principle of Swedish education policy is that all basic education shall be provided at school. To attain a workforce, which can develop further in the workplace and be flexible, good foundation in general subjects is the most important prerequisite. The Swedish authorities see upper secondary education as a minimum and tertiary level as the ideal goal – and even a right for all Swedes. They aim at laying a solid foundation for learning throughout life, a commitment to equity and social inclusion, openness and participation. The AEI and the reformed upper secondary education assure the same goal and underpin the basic education principle.

Around 6 % of upper secondary students have a mother tongue other than Swedish. Many of these students take 'home language' courses in their respective languages and many of them also receive instruction in Swedish as a second language. Over 60 % of the students in basic

adult education were born outside Sweden. In upper secondary adult education the corresponding proportion is about 17 % (Swedish Institute, 1998).

2.2.2. Equal access and equally good education

A fundamental principle of Swedish education policy is that all Swedes should have equal access to equally good education in the State-run school system – independent of gender, place of residence and financial and social conditions. Curricula and grading are therefore uniform with nine years' compulsory education. The upper secondary education – recently reformed – is open and flexible, providing basic qualification giving access to higher education in all tracks – either vocational or general tracks. The Swedish education system is a structured uniform system from elementary level to upper secondary schooling and adult education.

2.2.3. The blurring of the distinctions between general and vocational education and initial and continuing vocational training

Since the 1991 reform, upper secondary education has gained in flexibility. Both in the general and vocational tracks, students follow a three-year programme of studies with basic preparation for tertiary education. The same applies to adult education (see Section 2.3.1. on compulsory education and Section 4.1. on a common curricula).

In particular, the 1991 upper secondary reform has broadened vocational pathways. Rather than having a large number of pathways offering courses covering a fairly narrow occupational area, the 14 vocational programmes provide wider instruction in each related occupation. Students may also devote 15 % % of their time to subjects of their choice. However, this reform raises many practical difficulties:

(a) the real choice available to students within any school is rather limited and students are selected according to their grade rather than their preferences;

(b) 85 % of students' time is devoted to centrally determined subjects. The limited proportion of students' time devoted to non-core subjects makes it much more difficult for the school to be responsive to local labour market needs;

(c) more skilled teachers are required, able to work flexibly within and outside the school to strengthen the connection between both worlds – the classroom and the workplace.

A change in the way that schools are managed and teachers organised has also occurred. A work place training (APU) agreement for upper secondary education is working. In 1996, an agreement was negotiated between the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, the Swedish Teachers' Union and the National Union of Teachers (LR) in Sweden. It replaces, for instance, teaching hours with working time as the basic unit for work organisation. As a consequence, the more flexible structure allows students to navigate more freely through levels, or to mix several programmes.

The links between school and working time take a number of forms: practical working life orientation (*praktisk arbetslivsorientering*) at compulsory school; career education and guidance; APU during upper secondary school; advisory or other forms between individual schools and their local employers to improve programme development and implementation; and formal relationships between employers, trade unions and educational policy-makers.

2.2.4. Enormous investment in education and a comprehensive system

Sweden has invested a lot in education funding from compulsory school to popular movements. According to the budget summary for 2000, in most of the guidelines, investment is increasing. An example of such a big investment is the AEI (see Section 2.3.2. on adult education). Through a comprehensive system, Sweden is targeting under-educated people more easily.

2.2.5. Social and local partnership

Sweden has a long tradition of social partner involvement in VET. The regional growth agreements – introduced in 1998 – have started to be implemented in 2000. Within their framework, the local and regional players, e.g. LO, SACO, SAF, and TCO, will collaborate on measures to increase growth and employment. The idea behind the government's initiative is that the greatest knowledge on the criteria and suitable measures for local and regional growth and employment is to be found among those most closely involved.

Numerous forms of cooperation have been developed: the national action plan for employment (NAP) between the government and social partners; efforts by training coordinators and trade unions to stimulate and motivate reluctant recruits to further education. The trade unions are contributing by arranging counselling for and actively visiting groups in the community with a low level of education. These activities are carried out with the assistance of the local authorities and training organisations. Such collaboration ensures that less-educated people are supported in their own local environment, and are motivated and encouraged to improve their employability. The work conducted for the AEI and KY are examples of regional cooperation between employers, trade unions, school and education providers, as are the employment service committees which involve local authorities, local business and individuals (see also Section 3.7.).

2.3. Brief description of the education and vocational training system in Sweden

2.3.1. Youth education

2.3.1.1. Compulsory education

Basic schools, schools for the Saami, special schools for children with special needs (impaired sight, hearing or speech) and compulsory schools for the mentally disabled are compulsory for nine years. Parents can decide if their children should start school at the age of six or seven. In January 1998, the responsibility for pre-school activities and school childcare was transferred from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Science. This underscores the importance of early childhood education and care as a foundation for lifelong learning. Upper secondary schools, Komvux and education for mentally disabled adults are voluntary.

2.3.1.2. Upper secondary education

Municipalities provide upper secondary schooling for all residents who start studying before the age of 20. At the end of the 1980s, a structural reform of the upper secondary school was initiated, which led to major alterations of the School Act in 1991. A new system of upper

secondary education was introduced in the school year 1992/93, and was fully implemented in the school year 1995/96. Since 1996, the responsibility for young people with mental disabilities was transferred to the municipalities. There are also a number of upper secondary schools run by private providers, mostly in major urban areas (see Section 2.1. on independent schools).

To accomplish the school plan set out by the municipality (see Section 2.1. on the local administration.), schools use criteria in the form of a points system – apart from the number of teaching hours – to determine whether an educational programme is completed. Thus, a student obtains a certain number of points on completion of a course with a minimum pass mark, i.e. when the knowledge and skills the course aims at providing have been acquired. These points are based on the number of hours allocated in the time schedule to each course, irrespective of the number of hours taken in each individual case to attain the goals. No courses may consist of less than 30 hours or equivalent number of points (50 hours in schooling for people with mental disabilities). The syllabi, which are drawn up to ensure continuity with those in the compulsory schools, state the aims and goals of the course as well as the knowledge and skills that all students shall achieve on completion of the course. The government has issued syllabi for all eight subjects. The syllabi for other subjects are determined by the National Agency for Education (Swedish Institute, 1998).

Students choose between 16 national programmes, of which 14 are primarily vocationally oriented while the two remaining primarily prepare students for university studies. Most national programmes are divided into municipal tracks in the second and third years. In addition to the national branches drawn up centrally, municipalities may choose to set up local branches adapted to local needs and conditions. The following eight core subjects are common to all programmes: Swedish, English, civics, religious studies, mathematics, natural sciences, physical education and health, and artistic activities. In addition, students choose specific subjects for completing their studies in the programme. All students also carry out a project during their studies. These core subjects make up around one third of total study time. In the vocationally-oriented programmes, at least 15 % of the students' total time is to be spent at workplaces while the module is optional in theoretical programmes. School supervisors are responsible for the procurement of training opportunities and the students' supervision during their workplace training. Municipalities offer a selection of national programmes. When a municipality is unable to provide all programmes, it cooperates with other municipalities (Swedish Institute, 1998).

The following national programmes are vocationally oriented:

- **arts,** broad basic education for work within arts-related professions;
- **business and administration,** for work in commerce and administration in private business and public administration;
- **construction**, for work in the construction industry, building or civil engineering;
- **child recreation,** for work in childcare, after-school and recreational activities, sports and libraries;
- **electrical engineering programme**, for work on installation, repair and maintenance of electrical, telecommunications and electronic equipment;
- **energy**, for work in, e.g. electricity and power stations, heating, ventilation and sanitation installations as well as related work onboard ships;
- **food**, for work within food processing, sales and distribution;

- **handicraft**, for work within different handicraft and trade professions with a large part of the education being located at workplaces;
- **health care,** for work within the health, dental and support service sectors;
- **hotel, restaurant and catering**, for work as, e.g. a receptionist, conference organiser;
- **industry**, for work within industrial production, including programming and operating computer-controlled machines and processes;
- **media,** for work within advertising, various forms of design and production of graphic media;
- **natural resource**, for work in agriculture, forestry, horticulture and animal husbandry;
- **vehicle engineering**, for work in the repair and maintenance of cars, lorries and machines.

2.3.1.3. Individual programme (IV)

In 1998, 98 % of the age group leaving compulsory education continued to upper secondary education, of which 8 % – 115 507 pupils (Skolverket, 2000a) – started the individual programme (IV). Students who do not succeed in the three core subjects either in compulsory education or in upper secondary education – Swedish or Swedish as a second language for immigrants, English and Mathematics – are oriented towards the IV programme. This programme allows students to combine a traineeship in a company with studies in particular subjects (including academic and vocational themes) in upper secondary education. After having studied in an IV programme to bring up to standard any deficiencies in subjects from compulsory school, most pupils in IV programmes transfer to one of the national programmes or to a specially designed programme. The specially designed programmes consist of a new form of apprenticeship – equivalent to a national programme – which has been tried out in some municipalities since 1997. Students who have requirements other than those provided for within the 16 national programmes, have the option to follow a specially designed programme, for which the student, in cooperation with the school, follows an individual study plan. Students get credits for the courses they have completed.

All individualised training programmes are personalised to suit the individual's needs . Their objectives are to:

(a) assist students who have difficulties in keeping up with the upper secondary education programme;

(b) allow young people who need remedial teaching to reach the level of compulsory education;

(c) allow young people to combine studying upper secondary education subjects with a job that teaches vocational skills.

The purpose of the IV initiative is to give students the opportunity to acquire basic knowledge and to obtain a diploma. At the end of these programmes, students should have acquired the necessary knowledge to pursue further studies in national or specially adapted programmes. For students who are unsure of their study choice, the IV programme provides several different opportunities, including introductory courses for young immigrants and follow-up initiatives. In these cases, the IV aims to help the student to transfer to a national programme. The primary aim for students, who need measures of a compensatory nature, is to provide the knowledge and skills equivalent to that provided by the nine-year compulsory school in those subjects which the student lacks. Since the IV programme is based on the student's needs, it can vary both in duration and content. The programme can also be used for education within special vocational fields or apprenticeship training combined with studies at upper secondary school.

2.3.2. Adult education

2.3.2.1. Municipal adult education

The public school system for adults is regulated by the School Act (UFB SOS 1996, 1996) and targets all adults above the age of 19. The system is comprised of municipal adult education (Komvux) and SFI (see Section 2.3.3.for further details on SFI). As for youth education, the municipalities are responsible for running these schools.

Komvux has existed in Sweden since 1968 and it includes basic adult education and upper secondary adult education. *Basic adult education* provides knowledge and skills equivalent to those offered by the compulsory school system and is a right for individuals. Therefore, municipalities are obliged to make it available to all citizens who require it. *Upper secondary adult education* provides knowledge and skills equivalent to that taught at upper secondary level. It can offer the same programmes and subjects – with the exception of aesthetic subjects and sports – as upper secondary school. Although people over the age of 20 are not entitled to upper secondary education, municipalities are obliged to make an effort to provide educational opportunities corresponding to such demand and individual needs. In principle, time schedules applied in national programmes within the upper secondary school also apply to upper secondary adult education (see the AEI example in Box 1).

Studies within Komvux lead to formal qualifications in individual subjects or the equivalent of a complete leaving certificate from compulsory school and/or upper secondary school. Education is organised in the form of separate courses and arranged in such a way that students can combine their studies with employment. Students are free to choose their own study programme and they can also combine studies at basic and upper secondary level. There are no entrance requirements or leaving examinations.

Table 2: Number of students in adult education, 1998

Educational level / Responsible authority	**Number of students**	**Of those (%)**			**Courses/ student**
		women	**born abroad**	**persons that study during evenings**	
Basic	47 705	63.9	59.8	12.8	3.3
Upper-secondary	260 612	65.9	16.3	19.2	5.7
In municipal	253 398	65.3	16.8	19.7	5.6
county council	7 214	86.5	0.6	1.4	10.4
Supplementary ed.	8 381	52.1	10.8	4.0	8.9
In municipal	7 123	50.0	12.0	4.7	9.1
county council	1 258	64.1	4.1	0.0	7.9
All levels	**316 698**	**65.2**	**22.7**	**17.8**	**5.4**
In municipal	308 226	64.7	23.3	18.3	5.3
county council	8 472	83.2	1.1	1.2	10.0

Source: SCB (2000).

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2.3.2.2. Supplementary adult education

Supplementary adult education provides vocational courses, which are not available in youth education. These courses lead to higher professional qualifications or to qualifications in a new profession. Trainees undertake training for a period of six months to one year. The focus is mostly on subjects such as economics, computing and tourism.

2.3.2.3. National schools for adults

Outside the public school system there are two national schools for adults (SSV), which are run by the State. Instruction in SSV supplements Komvux and is partly or entirely distance learning. Participants are recruited from all over the country.

2.3.2.4. University

Everyone who has completed education in a national or specially designed programme at upper secondary school with at least a passing grade for 90 % of the core subjects and an approved project (see upper secondary for a list) fulfils the basic admission requirements for higher education. Adults are eligible for university education in two cases. Either if they have a passing grade from upper secondary school for adults, or if they fulfil the 24:4 rule, i.e. the student should be above 24 years old during the academic year and should have been employed during at least half time for four years. (The breakdown by age of the student population can be seen in the following table.

Entrance to university broken down by age group, fall 1999:

	> 25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66 +	Total
No. of students	38.186	10.430	4.197	1.003	107	17	53940
%	70.79	19.33	7.78	1.86	0.20	0.03	100

Source: SCB, 2000.

Between 2000 and 2002, the government plans to invest further, thus the number of places in higher education will continue to rise and is expected to lead to a total of 89 000 new full-time places between 1997 and 2002. Thus, 50 % of a student age group leaving upper secondary education should start higher education before the age of 25.

2.3.2.5. Labour market training

Providers of continuing vocational training (CVT) are public institutions (e.g. Komvux, folk high schools, etc.), trade unions, employers' associations, private enterprises and training companies (see Section 3.5.1.) on the financing of labour market training).

Labour market policy is the responsibility of the National Labour Market Board (AMS), and its implementation is the responsibility of the Labour Market Training Agency (AMU) recently transformed into a State-owned private enterprise, which competes with other training providers. Both AMS and AMU are highly decentralised. Locally, the employment agency (AMS) defines the training needs, and the training centre (AMU centre) offers courses for the unemployed or 'at risk' employees. AMS is responsible for issuing guidelines and remits to the county labour boards, following up activities in the counties and it allocates resources.

The county labour boards (*Länsarbetsnämnder*) are responsible for general labour market affairs at county level. This also means responsibility for employment offices, employability institutes (AMI) and working life services. A board is headed by a directorate and chaired by the county governor. The county labour boards have a local employment services committee. This is a joint body, which shapes labour market policy to suit local conditions in every municipality, and is made up of representatives of the county labour board, the employment service, the municipality, the trade unions and the enterprise sector.

Employment offices (*arbetsförmedling*) – totalling 418 offices – are situated in almost all municipalities. These offices may be specialised to cater for specified occupational categories, such as technology, industry, caring service, economics and the arts. The specialised employment offices are mostly found in larger cities. Employment offices are also open to employed people. Individuals who want a change of occupation can also turn to the employment service, which offers recruitment and placement services for employers as well.

Each county has one or more AMI. They provide support for disabled people and other job seekers that need special help in order to obtain work. There is an advisory delegation for vocational rehabilitation in each county labour board. The YR (Delegation for Vocational Rehabilitation) is an advisory body that observes and supports the development of measures to promote the recruitment of people with functional impairment.

Working life services, which are located in every county, are a branch of the labour market administration, which is self-financed. They offer vocational rehabilitation on a consultancy basis to companies, organisations and public authorities. In Sweden, an individualised service is also offered through the *individual action plan* – the so-called 'job seekers plan'. Its main aim is to obtain employment for individuals in the regular labour market. In some instances, the outcome will also be the beginning of a regular educational programme with the job seeker leaving the labour force or a long-term job (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000).

The plan includes the following steps: a first interview usually takes place when a person is registered. Second, a job seeker plan is established for all job seekers within 70 days (for those under the age of 25) and within five months for others. For many job seekers, the plan is drawn up well within these limits.

In February 1999, 180 000 people were in labour market policy programmes including 50,000 in labour market training (Swedish National Labour Market Board, General monthly statistics 1999:3, p. 37 in *Skolverket*, 2000b, p.34; see Table 1b).

Box 1: Example from the Varberg Municipal Board centre for lifelong learning (free translation)

An example of how lifelong learning and VET is carried out in practice can be demonstrated in Varberg municipality. Varberg is situated on the west coast of Sweden with a total of 52 516 inhabitants, 25 046 of which live in the city of Varberg (www.varberg.se).

About the same time as the AEI and the KY programme started, the municipality decided to group all adult education in a special organisation, called the centre for lifelong learning (CLL), with the task of coordinating and developing adult education in basic, upper-secondary and post-secondary levels. CLL is organised directly below the municipal board and the director is directly below the municipal director.

The overall aim is to promote the level of education and training in the municipality to meet the demand for higher qualifications. The aim is stated in the municipal school-plan for adult

education in basic, upper-secondary and post-secondary education. By facilitating lifelong and lifewide learning the individual can stay employable. This is illustrated in the figure, which is adopted in a special document as a foundation for the future planning of VET in the municipality.

Competences pyramid (*Kompetenspyramiden*)

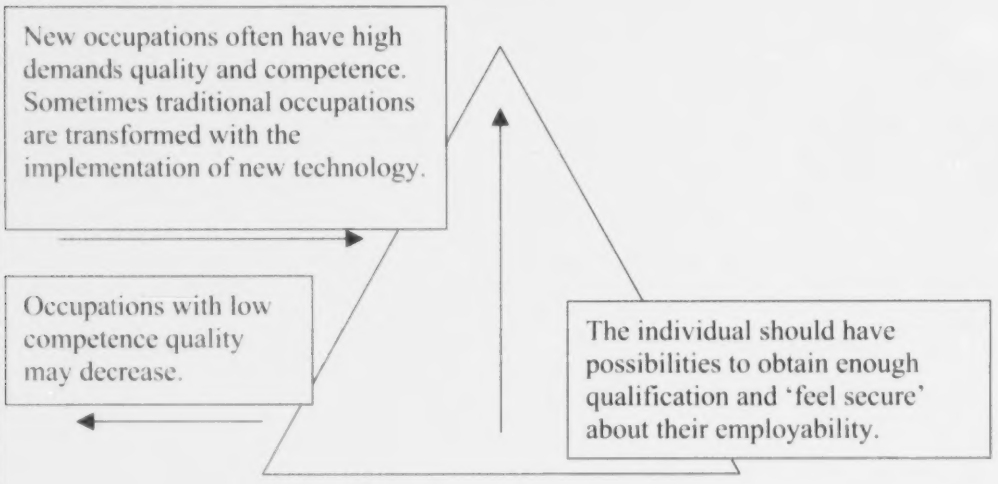

New occupations often have high demands quality and competence. Sometimes traditional occupations are transformed with the implementation of new technology.
Occupations with low competence quality may decrease.
The individual should have possibilities to obtain enough qualification and 'feel secure' about their employability.

Table: Number of students in adult education

Numbers of	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**
Upper secondary points	-	480 247	520 000	620 000
Students in SFI	128	102	70	35
Students in basic adult education	190	160	125	95
Students in KY programmes	90	155	135	160
Students in tertiary education	20	30	40	75
Budget SEK	-	**12 376 000**	**13 511 000**	**15 118 000**

During the fall of the year 2000, five KY programmes were in progress, covering 80-100 points (see Section 3.1.2. on the point system) in energy-adjustment, intranet, logistics, production technology, and trade and sales. In connection with the KY programmes, the municipality is also organising preparation for education and training in upper secondary education in the same subjects. The purpose is to make local courses available within the areas where the municipality has a strong trade or industry. The KY programmes are not only targeting municipality inhabitants, they are nationwide.

The high school in *Borås* has one open entrance to engineering education in Varberg and the electronic engineering programme for 120 points. They also have a law overview course during evenings. Preparations for a distance education within the tertiary level are given in the form of a videoconference system as well as ICT. With the possibility of having a supply of courses from different universities, there will be considerable increased access to lifelong learning on the tertiary level in a flexible system.

Infrastructure

Varberg's vocational counselling office was established in 1997, the result of cooperation between Varberg municipality and the employment office. It provides guidance, counselling and information to individuals. The courses cater for the needs of the individual. Thus, advice and information on the different possibilities available are important to simplify and facilitate participation in VET.

A new studio for video communication has been set up, and a special working group is exploring new pedagogical methods. There is also extensive work going on in documenting the possibilities of cooperation with other municipalities and different universities.

Cooperation

Within the AEI today, there are approximately 10 educational providers together with Komvux. An extensive network has been developed among educational providers and between educational providers and CLL. Some providers have participated in projects on validation, distance education and part-time studies and many meet regularly to discuss organisation and andragogy, and share experiences.

Regarding the AEI, there is a planning group consisting of members from the employment office, trade and industry, unions, Komvux, study councillors, the labour market board, the office for social benefits and welfare and CLL. The group discusses the need for and the anticipated demand for future VET as well as adult education in general.

An association, which from the start consisted of 10 enterprises and CLL representing the municipality, was founded with the purpose of increasing the contribution from the enterprises regarding 'competence' and to encourage their commitment to education and vocational training in order to promote future competence qualifications. The number of engaged enterprises has increased considerably and the association will start an organisational education activity targeting member enterprises and their personnel. The education and training offered will consist of tailor-made courses for association members and their special target groups, as well as courses within the AEI or KY programmes. This is an example of how cooperation between all the Komvux and local enterprises can be expressed within the framework of a continuing and lifelong learning. The association will also be an important group of reference for the local planning of VET.

New building for VET

The municipality has approved a plan for continuing investment in VET in which goals have been established. There is also a proposal for new multipurpose buildings to be built that will also accommodate newly started knowledge intensive small enterprises.

2.3.2.6. Advanced vocational education (KY)

During the period 1996 to 2001, a pilot project implementing KY was carried out, which emphasised workplace learning in post-secondary education (see Section 2.3.4. on CVT). KY courses should combine practical orientation with in-depth theoretical knowledge, with objectives of trying out new post-secondary courses, new teaching methods and new training arrangements (see Section 3.9.). The training should take place in a familiar environment and provide a wider experience than merely in-house company training, if possible in more than one company. The education in KY projects is post-secondary, in the sense that completed

upper secondary education or equivalent knowledge is a requirement. This initiative is targeted at both students coming directly from upper secondary education and people already employed who wish to develop their skills within a defined area. The subject matter is taken from the labour market, courses in higher education, upper secondary, supplementary and advanced courses. There are many areas, in which KY can be relevant, e.g., the engineering industry, trade and tourism, agriculture or forestry and the forest industry, information technology, health care and the environmental sector.

Today, the work environment demands broader skills in both theory and practice as well as 'cross-curriculum skills' such as the ability to work in a team, communicate and solve problems. KY is based on broader skills required in working life and actual needs of the local labour market. To ensure that occupational concerns are taken care of, representatives of working life are in a majority in the management group. The group that decides on course management is composed of a working life representatives, local authority representatives, higher education representatives and training organisers – that decide on course management. KY courses are carried out under the supervision of the committee for qualified vocational training – a national level committee (*Kommitten för kvalificerad Yrkesutbildning).* Various training organisers can apply to the committee to start a KY course such as local authorities, private companies and organisers of adult education. The committee prioritises courses that can help to counteract bottlenecks in the labour market.

One third of the courses which takes place at the workplace, are funded by the employer and improve students' analytical abilities for applying comprehensive and methodological approaches, and assuming responsibility. Courses are either divided into terms or conducted continuously. Students cannot be employed and they are entitled to financial support subject to the current regulations for higher education. The courses should confer at least 40 'points' – i.e., comprise 40 weeks' full-time study. A course – consisting of 80 points or more – leads to a KY certificate or diploma.

To satisfy basic requirements, the workplace should be organised to make learning feasible. Course providers wishing to get permission to provide KY courses must have a proposed syllabus for the educational programme as well as for the individual course. The workplace-training element of KY is important which means active participation by employers in designing the courses is also required. Other important considerations include:

(a) the quality of the education, and quality assurance in provision;

(b) that education should help to break any gender segregation of educational and occupational choice, and it should stimulate women's interest in occupations oriented towards the natural sciences and technology;

(c) that the education is linked to the employment market.

During the period from 1996 to 1998, of all participants, 46 % were women and 10 % were born abroad. Of those having completed training, 70% got jobs within three months. By autumn 1999, there were 150 different organisers.

An independent evaluation of the first KY pilot project was carried out by Luleå University of Technology. The evaluation includes the relation to employment market needs, whether students received good quality education of relevance to future employment. Results show that KY has been successful. From 1 700 places in 1996, it rose to 8 800 places in 1998 (AMS, 2000). The pilot project has now been extended and from 1999 onwards, it provides 12 000 places (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000).

2.3.2.7. The adult education initiative (Kunskapslyftet)

The adult education initiative (AEI) is a five-year programme, which started on 1 July 1997, to boost adult education and training in Sweden (Sohlman, 1998). The aim is to bring about a comprehensive national expansion of knowledge to update adult education. The primary target group of the AEI is unemployed adults who do not have upper secondary qualifications, although it is also aimed at employees who left school early. The AEI is intended to promote workplace modernisation and development (see Section 3.7. for details about the administration of the AEI).

Box 2: Examples adapted from OECD (1998b, pp.67-68).

1. Jokkmokk, a typical sparsely populated municipality far up in the north of Sweden with 6 500 inhabitants has an industrial life dominated by forestry, hydropower and reindeer husbandry. Unemployment is high and traditional industries have a declining need for labour. By means of IT technology and under the slogan 'let's move knowledge, not people', a large part of education in the AEI was carried out as distance education. The ambition is to make high quality education accessible to all people in the non-coastal areas of Norrland.
2. In the municipality of Nässjö with around 30 000 inhabitants, the wood industry is dominant. Small enterprises are the foundation of industrial life, but the municipality is the largest employer. The wood industry is slowly and steadily changing from manual to computerised production. In Nässjö, industrial life has from the beginning been an important partner in the AEI. A special council of industry consisting of representatives from Nässjö Näringsliv AB, the educational centre in Nässjö, the employment office as well as the municipality will together increase quality and flexibility in education, produce educational plans adjusted to the educational needs of companies and municipal employees. Approximately one fourth of the students in the AEI are employed, a figure which is significantly higher than the national average.
3. Malmö in the south of Sweden is the third largest city with almost 240 000 inhabitants. One fourth of these have immigrant backgrounds. In order to reach the right target group for the AEI, an Infotek was established in the centre of Malmö and run as a joint project between the City of Malmö, the employment office and the University College of Malmö. The Infotek has a key function in terms of recruitment and the provision of counselling. The AEI has also purchased visiting services from LO, SIF and the Commercial Employee's Union. The trade union organisations have a number of full-time employees working on recruitment activities for the AEI in the city of Malmö. The municipality has a large proportion of inhabitants receiving social assistance. As part of the work of motivating people to study, the municipality has decided to let people who are dependent on social assistance study and retain their social assistance, and in addition get textbooks and other teaching material cost-free.
4. In the upper secondary school for health sciences in Sundsvall, the AEI provides education in the upper secondary school health care programme for 20 persons with low education, who work in social services and 20 long-term unemployed. When the employees are sitting at their school desks for one month, the unemployed join their work teams and perform their work tasks. After one month they change, those who have been studying go back to work and those who have been working go back to studies. Normal salary is paid out during working time and during studies a special educational grant is paid out plus an additional contribution from the municipality. The average age is 40 which is considerably higher than the average age in the AEI.

5. In Norrköping, different educational organisers are cooperating in a project called the 'knowledge ring'. Under the direction of the folk high school in Marieborg and in conjunction with study associations, the SSV in Norrköping, and the municipality, education is organised for less-educated persons in a housing area with a high density of immigrants, various types of social problems and a high incidence of ill health. In the knowledge ring an environment has been created which is particularly suited for less-educated persons. As a result of special resources for basic education in the AEI, it is possible to carry out education at that level and allow popular adult education teaching approaches to achieve a breakthrough.

The AEI is financed by the State, but administered by municipalities. The State contributes a special government grant of about SEK 3 billion (EUR 345 502 706) a year, which is the largest spending ever on adult education in Sweden, and corresponds to the estimated cost of 100 000 full-time study places.

The AEI reaches groups with low levels of education and motivation. In 1999, resources corresponding to 101 550 annual student places were allocated to the AEI – 101 913 are expected in 2000, of which 5 000 are for basic education and 10 000 will be distributed by the National Council of Adult Education (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000, p.13). Among other facts, 33 % of those participating were male, the proportion of course participants over the age of 30 continues to rise and was almost 60 % in the spring of 1999. The less educated – those with a maximum of two years of upper-secondary education – amounted to 67.5 % in spring 1999, which represents an increase of 4 percentage points since autumn 1997. The AEI has also meant an increase in the proportion of vocational courses. The results show 'that the prioritised target groups are reached to a higher degree the longer the adult initiative is in force' (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000, p. 5). The programme will be expended for another year – until 2003. The trade union organisations will continue with outreach activities and will pursue their efforts to reach those with low levels of education and motivation (see Section 3.9.).

It is difficult to report statistics dealing only with the AEI:

'In many municipalities the adult initiative is integrated with the upper secondary education for adults. It is not possible to separate the students. Therefore our report is about upper secondary school for adults **including** the adult initiative.' (Skolverket, 2000).

Upper secondary school for adults – integrating the AEI – can be measured in different ways (see more data in Annex 6.2.):

Table 3: Extent of education from autumn 1997 till autumn 1999

Extent of education	**Upper secondary education for adults including the AEI**					**Changes spring 99 - autumn99**
	Autumn 1997	**Spring 1998**	**Autumn 1998**	**Spring 1999**	**Autumn 1999**	**%**
Full-time study places	113 475	142 529	144 630	156 815	129 693	- 17.3
Number of students	172 934	191 456	227 885	228 010	208 034	-8.8
No. course partic.	776 248	928 631	958 865	975 049	822 858	- 15.6
Courses per student	4.5	4.9	4.2	4.3	4.0	-7.5

Source: National Agency for Education (2000).

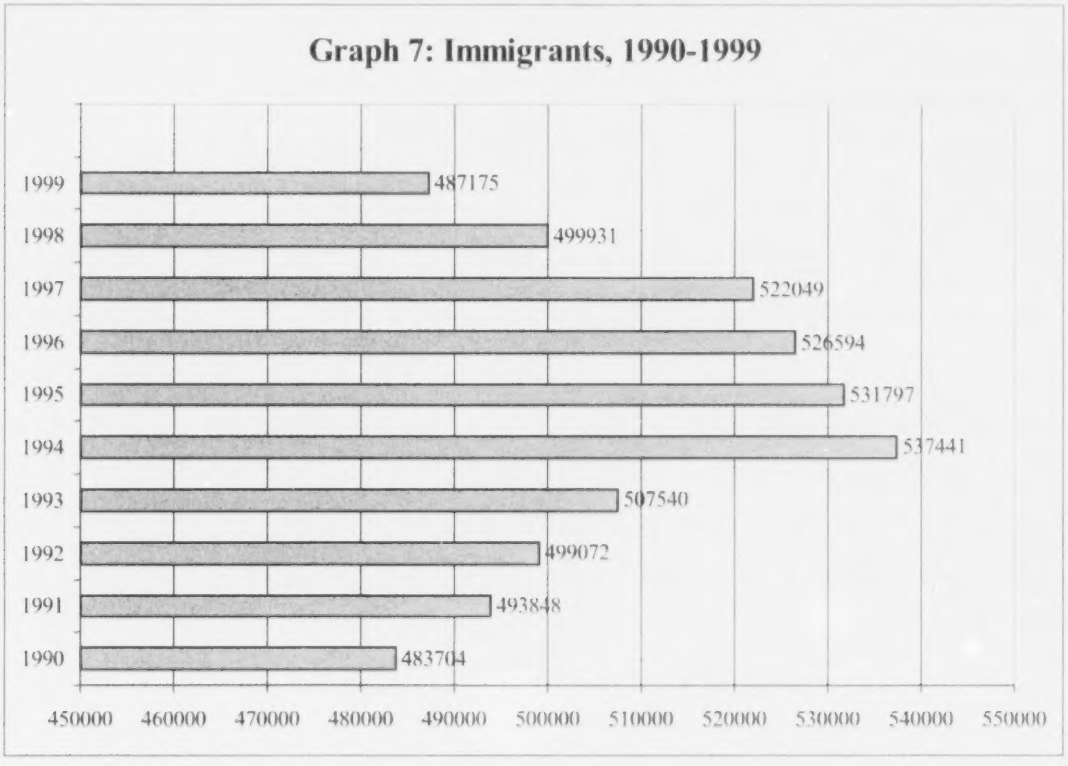
Several evaluations have been conducted on the AEI (Wass, 1999; Lander, 1998). Among them, an international expert committee (Rubenson, Tuijnman and Wahlgren, 2000) found that the AEI was very important and interesting both in an international and in a nation

al perspective. They were impressed by how the work was implemented and found constructive results. They included suggestions on how to extend the implications further and these are included in the proposal which the AEI committee submitted in April 2000 to the Swedish government (SOU 2000:28, *Kunskapsbygget*) concerning the orientation, scope and organisation of publicly-supported adult education in the future. The AEI evaluation has been further developed and a continuum is suggested in the form of the 'knowledge-building initiative' (Kunskapsbygget in SOU, 2000:28). In Section 3.4., the eight different themes of this knowledge building initiative are described.

2.3.3. Immigrant education and Swedish language instruction

The number of immigrants is increasing, on average, by 5 % of the Swedish population each year (see Graph 7).

Graph 7: Immigrants 1990-99



Source: SCB (2000).

Immigrants and foreigners living in Sweden have an opportunity to participate in adult education programmes such as SFI, KOMVUX, and other schools for adults, free of charge.

The educational goal for SFI students is to understand and to make themselves understood in daily Swedish living situations. They receive civic education so that the student can live and function as an active member of Swedish society. The instruction is individualised according to the student's needs and is taught in Swedish. The studies lead to a specific competence as measured by the Swedish basic proficiency test (*test i svenska för invandrare*). This exam allows access to Komvux. SFI schools are open to anyone over the age of 16, new courses start continually throughout the year and students are offered flexible teaching hours.

SFI education also includes special classes intended for immigrants who have attained a maximum of seven years of education in their country of origin. These classes are targeted at immigrants who have difficulties in reading and writing. The studies can also be combined with other subjects such as mathematics, and with other practical concerns, such as sewing, art and drama.

The government has given the Agency for Administrative Development the task of investigating whether the SFI education should be included in Komvux. The goal is to integrate immigrants into Swedish society by combining studies in Swedish with studies in other subjects at various levels. The course could be either theoretical, in subjects with which the student is familiar, or training in a workplace that fits the interests and needs of the individual. Students will continually develop their Swedish language together with their vocational knowledge (SOU 2000:28, p. 686).

2.3.4. Work-based training

2.3.4.1. In initial training, as part of alternating courses

School boards at municipal or county levels are responsible for training opportunities and for supervision of students during their workplace training. Supervisors from the company evaluate the performance of students. Through this training, students come into direct contact with working life, companies and enterprises. For companies, this participation in workplace training allows them to influence the content, planning and implementation of training as well as to form an opinion about students they may wish to employ later on. However, finding a training place is difficult: on the 14 vocational tracks, about 40 % of students do not get a complete training in companies to which they are entitled during their last year of upper secondary education (Skolverket, 2000a).

2.3.4.2. Role of the enterprise in continuing vocational training

In a number of sectors, a new form of education closely linked to the employment market is required. Although the range of courses offered at post-secondary level is very broad in Sweden, in many areas there is a lack of post-secondary education with significant elements of workplace learning (see Section 2.3.2. on labour market training and Box 1).

KY is a new form of post-secondary education where one third of the time is spent in the advanced application of theoretical knowledge at the workplace. This includes active workplace learning and problem solving in an educational context. The courses are based on close cooperation between enterprises and various course providers – such as higher education, upper secondary schools, Komvux and companies. The trial courses that receive the commission's approval are intended to correspond to real needs in the employment market.

However, there are no restrictions in terms of enterprise sectors where KY is to be provided. The courses are open both to individuals coming directly from upper secondary school and to people who are already employed and wish to develop their skills (see Section 2.3.2. for further details on KY).

The purpose of the KY project is to create a bank of experience relating to new courses, educational forms and providers and to involve both employment market actors and students. See also Graph 8 in Section 3.8.

2.3.4.3. Integration of work and learning

Through the AEI, vocationally-oriented employment training and learning are integrated. Adults without upper secondary education are entitled to get the opportunity to study core subjects (see Section 2.3.2. on upper secondary schools for adults) at upper secondary level with a special education grant corresponding to their unemployment allowances. Priority is given to those who have not completed upper secondary education, and among them unemployed adults (SOU 2000:28).

2.3.5. Informal learning

Since the late 19th century, Swedish adult education has been characterised by study circles and folk high schools, which symbolise a long tradition of self-education (see Table 4).

Table 4: Number of study circles during 1997/98 and number of participants by hours/course

Association organising the study circle[1]	Study circles	Participants		Hours of study	Participants/ study circle	Hours/ Study circle
		Total	Women			
ABF	96 149	827 985	484 383	3 612 700	8.6	37.6
FS	15 650	139 711	85 036	519 266	8.9	33.2
FU	17 868	161 128	106 393	806 410	9.0	45.1
Sfr	35 516	261 009	129 486	1 608 923	7.3	45.3
KFUK/M	3 879	32 817	18 984	153 330	8.5	39.5
SV	58 453	507 693	304 784	2 096 655	8.7	35.9
NBV	21 659	154 897	85 445	763 953	7.2	35.3
SISU	29 639	224 775	85 662	785 779	7.6	26.5
Mbsk	25 099	222 888	141 524	1 001 590	8.9	39.9
SKS	17 186	197 438	124 904	615 487	11.5	35.8
TBV	10 719	85 338	45 661	493 988	8.0	46.1
Total	**331 817**	**2 815 679**	**1 612 262**	**12 458 081**	**8.5**	**37.5**

[1] See list in annex.

Source: SCB (2000).

Adult education outside the public school system is also available at some 150 folk high schools, mainly residential and owned either by county councils (see the map in Section 2.1. on the local administration.) or by trade unions, churches, temperance societies or other non-profit organisations. Educational programmes are also offered through study circles organised by 11 nationwide voluntary educational associations. The latter are usually affiliated with a political party or special interest organisations. Folk high schools and voluntary educational associations are subsidised by the State, but the organisers are free to develop the content of their own courses.

The number of people with access to computers in their homes accounts for another aspect of study at home. In Sweden, this number increased during the 1980s and 1990s, from 3 % of the adult population in 1985 to more than 50 % today. In 1998, the possibility was introduced for tax-free private use of computer equipment supplied by the employer in certain circumstances (see Section 2.3.3.). Between 1997 and 1998, the proportion of employees having access to computers in the home increased from 48 to 67 %, which is the highest rate of increase since 1994. There are still differences between socio-economic groups. Among members affiliated to the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) in 1998, 51 % had access to computers in the home, while the corresponding figure for members of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) was 76 %, and 84 % for the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO). These differences also mean less computer availability in the home for certain children and young people. The use of computers and the Internet varies according to ethnic affiliation, gender, age, income and housing conditions. More women than men completely lack experience in using computers and the Internet. This usage falls steeply with increasing age and is higher for high-income earners than for low-income earners. People in metropolitan areas use computers and the Internet more than those in sparsely populated areas (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000, p. 32).

Swedes have a long tradition of taking part in popular movements – such as study circles and folk high schools. The entire population enjoys a high literacy level (see Section 2. for further details). This rich environment seems to feed itself and creates needs for further education. Boudard (2000) confirms this view by examining major antecedent factors influencing participation in adult education within IALS countries. The most important factor was literacy practices both at work and at home([2]). It follows two examples of informal learning: high reading practices and new technologies spreading.

According to the Swedish Institute, Swedish residents – today 8.9 million – are among the most avid newspaper buyers in the world (Swedish Institute, 1999). There is a combined circulation of about 3.8 million or 430 copies per 1 000 inhabitants of both high periodicity newspapers (four to seven issues per week) and low-periodicity newspapers (one to three issues per week). According to OECD and Statistics Canada (2000), Swedes are among those who report the most that they read a book at least once a month – about 70 % (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000, p.48). Of all Swedes, 47 % also report that they are engaged in community activities at least once a month, which is the highest participation rate among the IALS countries (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000, p. 50).

According to the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development, 89 % of those employed by the government and 78 % of those employed by county councils have access to computers, while in local authorities and the private sector, the proportion is around 60 % (Swedish

([2]) The indicator is composed of three items: the use of literacy reading at work, the use of literacy writing at work and the use of literacy reading at home.

Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000, p. 32). In 1998, the possibility for tax-free use of computer equipment supplied by the employer in certain circumstances was introduced. As a result, the proportion of employees that have access to computers in the home has increased from 48 to 67 % between 1997 and 1998 (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000, p. 32). The government is actually considering a State investment in a network that will allow fast Internet access for all Swedes.

3. Support measures to promote participation and access, modes of delivery and actors

3.1. Validation and recognition of non-formal learning

3.1.1. Validation of vocational skills for both foreigners and adults

According to the Swedish National Agency for Education, 'validation is an important instrument for a new and flexible adult education system emphasising the individual' (Skolverket, 2000b). Therefore, validation should be an active and continuous process in various parts of adult education. (Rubenson, Tuijnman and Wahlgren, 2000, p. 59). It is important to assess competence in formal grading and in practical experience.

In 1998, a special government-appointed commissioner presented the guiding principles for validation of foreign vocational skills at upper secondary school level, which would also be applicable to other levels of education. The government has recommended pilot projects for the validation of foreign vocational skills, and a broader pilot scheme was introduced, under which all adults can have their vocational skills validated, irrespective of where their qualifications were acquired.

A commissioner appointed by the government in 1999, was to implement and evaluate – in a first phase – three pilot projects during 2000 for validating foreign professional qualifications, and – in a second phase – propose organisational arrangements, models and methods for the validation of adult's knowledge and skills. The commissioner will have to consider – in a third phase – the need for a national validation system. This assignment will be concluded in December 2000. The project has to be considered in the lifelong learning perspective where validation is meant to facilitate entry into the labour market and to provide a basis for further studies.

3.1.2. Points system

Each course syllabus indicates the number of upper-secondary points the course comprises (see Section 2.3.1. for further details about upper secondary education and Section 2.3.2. for upper secondary adult education). Concerning upper secondary adult education, the same grading system applies as in upper secondary school. A student is awarded the full number of points when he/she has acquired the level of knowledge of the course. To achieve the objectives for each course, different individuals need to invest different amounts of work – a student who already has a certain amount of knowledge in the area concerned needs less time and effort to complete the course – the number of points awarded is directly connected to the amount of time the student has spent to reach the required level (National Agency for Education, 2000). The idea of the points system is to allow students flexibility to take courses when they wish.

The directives relating to the grading of students' performance are laid down in the 'Adult Education Ordinance' (*Komvuxförordningen*). Grades are awarded after the completion of each course. The ordinance directs teachers about awarding grades as well as the criteria established for the course. The National Agency for Education has established grading criteria for national courses in adult education at upper secondary and elementary levels. As far as local courses are concerned, the grade-awarding criteria are established by the municipal or regional authority in question (National Agency for Education, 2000).

There are no examinations in upper secondary school and adult education. However, within the new grading system for upper secondary schools, the award of grades is to be looked upon as a process of continuous assessment. Grades are awarded on the completion of every course on a four-point scale: 'fail, pass, pass with distinction and pass with high distinction'. Other criteria for the assessment of student achievements are written tests, project work, classroom observations and class conferences, involving all teachers taking the class in question.

In upper secondary school and adult education for people with mental disabilities, as well as in the teaching of Swedish for immigrants, the grading criteria 'pass and pass with distinction' are used. A record of grades is included in the leaving certificate for all courses in upper secondary education. It may also be issued on completion of basic adult education and adult education for people with mental disabilities.

Similarly in higher education, study time is measured in points and assessment is a continuous process. One week's full-time study is equivalent to one point and one term's full-time study corresponds to 20 points. Hence courses are often referred to in terms of the number of points they carry.

3.2. Local branches of education

While assuring that the foundation for lifelong learning has been laid down, upper secondary education may be adapted to local needs. The municipalities may set up local branches – out of the 14 national programmes – in accordance with the local market and enterprises (see Section 4.2. for an example of SSV cooperation with an enterprise). Furthermore, both the AEI and KY have been tailor-made for suiting enterprise needs (see Section 2.3.2. for examples of AEI).

There is large scope for adapting courses and programmes to local needs and therefore to set up varied provisions adapted to both workers and employers There is also a balanced choice between short and long courses provided by various organisers (see Table 5).

Table 5: Number of adults participating in short and long courses in the fall 1998, irrespective of level of education

Course category	Number of participant's weeks	Participants		
		Total	Women	immigrants
Long common courses	125 535	8 235	5 333	1 167
Long special courses	163 603	11 047	7 033	351
Special directed education	161 094	10 059	6,569	2 149
Total long courses	**450 232**	**29 341**	**18 935**	**3 667**
Short courses (1-14 days)	50 486	73 851	42 569	17
Study circle lead by a folkhighschoolteacher	2 030	1 338	891	0
IV programmes	2 354	141	80	16
Labour board, employment office	6 478	566	353	104
Municipalities	2 089	215	128	155
Other commissioned education/training	9 318	3 019	1 729	86
AEI, municipalities	31 148	2 000	1 395	291
AEI, KOMVUX.	4 478	413	328	14
AEI, information course	4 051	348	224	106
All courses	**562 664**	**111 232**	**66 632**	**4 456**

Source: SCB (2000).

3.3. An incentives infrastructure for lifelong learning

Sweden has a well-developed infrastructure for lifelong learning, including not only formal education, but also the informal learning that takes place in both working life and people's spare time. An important factor in this context is the right to leave of absence for studying. The Educational Leave Act, as activated since 1975, States that all employees are entitled to a leave of absence for studies, which normally can only be pursued during working hours. The act entitles an employee to a leave of absence if he or she has been working for the past six months or for a total of 12 months in the past two years. The employee is also entitled to trade union education. The choice of study programme rests entirely with the individual, i.e. both vocational and general education.

The right to educational leave is different from financial compensation. The act does not lay down any rules concerning employment benefits during educational leave, i.e. no pay or other financial benefits are guaranteed. Once educational leave has been awarded, the employee must either obtain compensation for loss of earnings by special agreement with the employer, or apply for financial compensation through, for example, the adult study assistance programme. On the other hand, there are job-security rules applying to persons exercising their right to leave of absence. The act also includes provisions concerning the rights of people wishing to discontinue their studies to return to work.

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Out of the central regulation – Komvux, the AEI, KY – individuals are free and highly encouraged to pursue further education with study assistance. An example is the right of absence which is not funded in Sweden – whereas it is in other countries – but study assistance provides many ways to apply for financing schemes (see Section 2.8.2. on State assistance for education). Education assistance is provided for all kinds of education – from popular education to KY – under an individual selection process with the constraint of a limited budget.

3.4. Bridging measures

The few obstacles to adult participation in higher education and continuing training are blurred in Sweden. A recent example is the proposal from the education building committee for eight new themes (see list below) targeted at adult education (see the knowledge building initiative in SOU, 2000:28). The themes are: (i) adults' rights to a high-quality basic education covering upper-secondary school including Komvux, to all the national programmes, to start studying within three to six months and to have study counselling; (ii) students with special needs and with functional impairment, should be provided with individual study plans and supportive education; (iii) long-term planning to achieve 135,000 places for adult education in upper-secondary schools in 2002, in Komvux and folk high schools; (iv) to provide better study assistance; (v) to provide a well functioning infrastructure for study and vocational counselling, individual study plans, validation, cooperation between different providers of education and training, enterprises and labour market administration (this theme also considers IT-based education at local level); (vi) cooperation between youth and adult education as well as cooperation between municipalities and the State to provide a structure for lifelong learning; (vii) increased investment in research and development and in-service training for teachers in adult education; (viii) theme number eight concerns globalisation and raises questions such as: What are the future challenges in education policy? What are the future needs in education? What is the degree of articulation between initial and continuing training and between vocational training and higher education, formal and non-formal learning?

Since 1991, both the integration of vocational and general tracks, and the development of a core curriculum laid down the foundations – for all students who complete their courses – to continue in higher education (see Section 2.3.1.).

3.5. Financing schemes

3.5.1. State finance

3.5.1.1. Youth education finance

Municipalities are responsible for organising compulsory and upper secondary school which they finance through local taxes and a general State grant. Resources are allocated to schools according to a voucher model in most of the municipalities. Each school management is responsible for the budget and should ensure that the school is run in accordance with the relevant curricula and local plans.

If there is no upper secondary school in the pupil's home municipality or the municipality does not provide the programme the pupil applies for, the municipality pays an intermunicipal fee.

All children up to the age of 16 receive a child allowance of SEK 750 (EUR 86) per month. The grant is payable until the age of 16.

The system may lead to inequalities since each municipality decides how to allocate its resources to education and other activities. The municipality should at the same time respect quality criteria on which they submit information together with an annual report to the National Agency for Education.

3.5.1.2. Adult education finance

Universities receive a three-year commission based on a maximum payment for a specified number of annual students and annual performance targets.

Komvux, SFI and Särvux are financed by a State grant. All courses are free of charge for participants, however teaching material, travel costs from school to lodging during the study period are under the students' responsibility for which they may apply for study grants (see Section 3.5.1.3. below on study assistance).

The AEI is financed by a special State grant, which corresponds to SEK 5 billion (EUR 575 837 844) for a period of 18 months – from summer 1997 to 1998. The grant corresponds to 111 500 full-time study places on a yearly basis – which was increased to 140 000 places in 2000. Of these 111 500 places, 10 000 are in the folk high schools, a maximum of 9 000 in KY and 5 000 in basic education. The State grant amounts to on average SEK 32 000 (EUR 3 685) per annual study place. The municipalities submit project applications for implementation under the AEI to the National Agency for Education, which gives them corresponding resources. The municipalities use funds freely for recruitment, counselling and education. The requirements are to produce the volume of education corresponding to the grant they receive, to respect the qualitative development measures they have described in their application, to participate in the follow-up and the evaluation of the investment. Students may apply to *Centrala Studiestödsnämnden* (CSN) for study assistance, which consist of: SVUXA, SVUX, SSV and UBS (see Section 3.5.1.3. below on study assistance).

Popular adult education is mainly financed by the State and its administration is under the supervision of the Swedish National Council of Adult Education.

Labour market training concerns unemployed or people at risk of becoming unemployed. There is an open market for purchasing education from educational organisers – such as public and private schools or private companies – in the sector of labour market training. People are financially covered either by social benefits or study assistance. The local office of employment decides who should participate in labour market training and use the State funds for procuring and paying training.

3.5.1.3. Study assistance

The National Board of Student Aid (*Centrala Studiestödsnämnden* - CSN) is the Swedish organisation responsible for giving study assistance, depending on the types of studies, in the form of grants, loans and hourly subsidies. In Sweden during 1998/99 (a period of 12 months), the total expenditure on study assistance amounted to SEK 27.200 million (EUR 3 132 558) compared to SEK 17.500 million (EUR 2 015 432) in 1995/96 (see Cedefop 1999, p. 105). Grants totalled SEK 15.500 million (EUR 1 785 097) and loans SEK 11.700 million (EUR 1

347 461). A total number of 819 400 people were granted some kind of study assistance during 1998/99 – compared to 677 169 in 1995/96 – distributed on types of studies as follows:

Table 6: Number of students (youths and adults) receiving aid by type of studies in 1999

Type of studies	Students
Elementary and upper secondary level (including students abroad)	544 200
Higher education (including students abroad)	270 900
Study circles and short courses at folk high schools	4 100
Särvux	200
Total	**819 400**

Source: CSN (2000).

NB Särvux is further explained in Section 2.1. on local administration.

All public education is wholly or partially financed by the public budget and tuition is free of charge in all public institutions. The law does not allow tuition fees to be charged in schools run by municipalities. Swedish tuition for immigrants, teaching materials, school meals and school transport are provided free of charge for compulsory school pupils. In most municipalities, meals and teaching materials are also free of charge to upper secondary students. In Komvux students may have to pay for teaching materials. Various financial assistance schemes are provided for students in upper secondary, adult and higher education.

3.5.1.4. Youth study assistance

Municipalities are obliged to compensate independent schools approved by the National Agency for Education for providing compulsory education for pupils who choose this type of school. This also applies to independent schools at the upper secondary level, although the level of compensation is not as high.

All students between 16 and 20 years in upper secondary education or a folk high school receive ***study assistance***. Students attending independent schools have the same right, if their studies are subject to supervision by the central authorities. This study assistance at upper secondary level is a general study grant representing a continuation of child allowance and payable to all students from the age of 16 and a needs-tested grant towards the cost of studies and daily travel.

3.5.1.5. Adult study assistance

Two types of aid are offered: post-secondary and adult study assistance. Among the students studying at upper secondary level and receiving study assistance, 59 % were below the age of 20 and 41 % were 20 or older. Of all students registered in higher education in undergraduate education and post-graduate level, 66 % received study assistance. Of all students at postgraduate level (advanced science and research studies), 8 % used study assistance for their maintenance. Of all those registered in studies towards professional degrees, about 87 % received study assistance and of those who were registered in studies towards general degrees, about 58 % received study assistance. Among the students in higher education who received study assistance, 52 % were below the age of 25. Of all registered students and of all students receiving study assistance, 58 % were women (CSN, 2000).

Post-secondary study assistance is granted for further education such as: folk high schools, Komvux, SSV and some other schools and educational paths. Post-secondary study assistance consists of a student grant and a student loan – the grant is about 27.8 %. The student has to pay back 4 % of her/his yearly income, starting from the seventh month of the first salary. There is no time limit for paying back the loan and after 65 years of age, the remaining debt is cancelled.

Adult study assistance is a collective term for: special adult study assistance, special adult study assistance for unemployed, special grant for education and training, short-term study assistance and boarding grants, hourly compensation, special adult study assistance for remedial education programmes and special adult study assistance for some of the technology and natural science education programmes. These forms of study assistance are intended primarily for employed people having not completed compulsory education who take a leave of absence in order to study and are not paid some or all of their salary during the leave. Both the AEI and KY are financed by UBS, SVUX and SVUXA (see below).

Participants in educational programmes lasting at least 15 days at an upper secondary school or folk high school or in a Komvux programme may be eligible for **special adult study assistance** (SVUX). Students admitted to post-secondary vocational education programmes are, as a rule, also granted SVUX. The student must have been gainfully employed for a period of four years prior to the commencement of studies in order to be granted such assistance. SVUX consists of an adult student grant and a loan element.

Special adult study assistance for unemployed people (SVUXA) is a separate form of study assistance, but is governed by many of the same regulations as the 'ordinary' adult study assistance. To be entitled to SVUXA, a student must be unemployed, registered for work at an unemployment benefit society, be at least 21 and have been gainfully employed for a period of at least three years. SVUXA is granted for studies at compulsory school and upper secondary levels.

Special grant for education and training (UBS) is a new form of study assistance – it succeeded ALU – which was introduced on 1 July 1997 conjointly with the AEI. It is primarily intended for unemployed people – 25 to 55 years of age – who lack full three-year upper secondary qualifications. About 15 % of allocated funds may be granted to employed people if the employer in exchange hires an unemployed person during the time of studies. UBS can be obtained for studies on elementary or upper secondary level and is entirely a grant.

Students who participate in a study circle or a brief subject course at a folk high school, in a Komvux programme or at a SSV centre and whose income is reduced as a result can be granted **short-term study assistance**.

Hourly compensation can be granted to participants in Särvux who are registered as domiciled in Sweden.

Swedish study assistance can also be granted for studies undertaken abroad if the educational programme is deemed to uphold an acceptable standard of quality.

From 1 July 2001, a new form of study assistance will be introduced (AMS, 2000). The aim is to expand the study assistance to both SVUX and SVUXA for those below 20 years of age. The new system will increase the proportion of financial support provided by study grants. It will consist of a student grant and a student loan. The grant will be approximately 34.5 % – 27.8 % in the current adult study assistance – which corresponds to 20 weeks full-time study or SEK 32 120 (EUR 3 699) (CSN, 2000).

3.5.1.6. Individual learning accounts

In December 1999, the government appointed a commissioner to analyse and design a system of individual learning accounts (SOU, 2000:51). The commissioner will present a final report by January 2001.

The system will encourage individuals to save money in a special account which will be complemented with public money – some parts of Stockholm are already implementing this system (see Section 3.8.). Thus, individuals can decide how to make the best choice for upgrading their competences. The idea is that individuals should take personal responsibility for their own learning development. The goal is that all individuals should have the opportunity to contribute to an individual learning account (ILA) through a system of tax subsidies. Individuals should choose when they start their learning account and the form of competence development for which it should be used. ILAs should complement rather than replace other financing of adult VET. It is also recommended that ILAs be supplemented by contracts and agreements with participation of the employer. Individuals will be permitted to save SEK 18,300 (EUR 3 108) a year, which generates a tax relief on income from employment. The employer could contribute up to the same amount to the employee's saving account. The conditions for using the account are that funds have been built up over the past twelve months and that they are earmarked for competence development.

3.5.2. Companies financing

The overwhelming proportion of in-service training is financed by the employer for which there is no reported information. Some joint financing occurs through European funds such as the European Social Fund, Objective 4.

Using three matching data sets([3]), le Grand (2000) studied the relationship between employees' risk of being unemployed and the amount and type of training they received. The study period was during the 1991-93 Swedish economic crisis where the labour market had changed from one of full employment to mass unemployment, which Sweden had not experienced even during the oil crises of the 1970s (le Grand, 2000). One of the main findings concerning unemployment risks, was that they are affected by the degree of transferability of skills to other firms. However, as the wage structure is more compressed in Sweden than other countries, and profits are more equally taxed than elsewhere, employers are encouraged to pay for general training since they will make greater profits from more skilled employees. Consequently, Swedish employers are more inclined to pay – or share the cost – for general in-service training than other countries (Acemoglu and Pischke, 1999; Loewenstein and Spletzer, 1999 in le Grand, 2000).

Companies finance KY courses for one-third of the programme cost (see Section 2.3.2. on KY).

([3]) They are: (i) survey data from the 1991 Swedish standard of living survey on individual and job-related characteristics of employees (LNU); (ii) data on annual firm reports; and (iii) data from the National Labour Market Board on registered unemployment.

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3.6. Guidance and information services

3.6.1. National and regional level information

At national and regional levels, the National Agency for Education provides advice and clarification of specific issues. In communicating information, the National Agency for Education makes use of a number of information channels, the most important of which are:

(a) its website which contains a wide range of information, with current press releases, the agency's newsletter, and subjects of topical interest. The site contains the control documents for school education, factual material relating to schools, service and reference material. The Ministry of Education (www.regeringen.se/inenglish/index.htm) also provides a Section. The AEI Internet site (www.kunskapslyftet.gov.se) is a meeting place for project leaders, teachers, students, employers, and others involved in or concerned with adult education and lifelong learning. The site provides information and answers to the most important questions and is continually updated with news, changes and reports;

(b) its computer network for schools, the contents of which include a 'link store', meeting places, a notice board, school addresses and a dictionary;

(c) dialogue with municipal authorities, by maintaining continual contact with project leaders and contact persons. The aim of this dialogue is to contribute to the development of adult education, by disseminating good examples that municipal authorities have experienced around the country;

(d) its newsletter which is an important channel for the communication of school information. It draws attention to news, changes and on-going projects which affect any aspect of school life and work, such as the AEI. The newsletter is sent out to school administration units of the municipal authorities, school governing boards, and school managers and head teachers;

(e) its field units which deal with enquiries and provide information; there are field units at 11 locations around the country. At each field unit there is a contact person for questions concerning the AEI;

(f) invitations to conferences and seminars held with the aim both of propagating information, and of creating meeting places where observations and experience can be exchanged and which can function as a hub for networking.

Box 3: The knowledge week (*Kunskapveckan). Source*: Swedish Ministry of Education (1999).

The Ministry of Education has proposed and supported a national 'knowledge week' to demonstrate how broad and manifold Swedish adult and popular education is. The week is aimed at enhancing the understanding of needs of adult education and lifelong learning from the perspective of both the individual and society. The event was concentrated in a week (from 10 to 16 April 2000), so the media could cover it and highlight the week for future participants.

The purpose was to coordinate the different activities the municipalities and other educational providers usually carry out in order to present their courses and programmes for the forthcoming year. The work was targeting those most in need of learning through debates, exhibitions, reports from newspapers, TV and radio, campaigns in the streets and shopping centres and special announcements aimed at all the non-employed.

A central reference group manages the event with members from 20 different organisations (see annex 6 for a complete list). Within this group, a steering group was set up where representatives from AMS, Swedish National Council of Adult Education, National Agency for Education, Svenska kommunförbundet, UR (the educational broadcasting service) and Ministry for Education and Science took part. At the local level, 230 municipalities were active in the work of the knowledge week. In most municipalities, the coordinators of the AEI had the task of coordinating all the different actors.

An evaluation of the week is in process and continuation of the event is proposed for 2001.

3.6.2. Local level information

A great deal of study guidance is provided in upper secondary schools with a view to support the student's subsequent studies. Vocational guidance is concerned both with the labour market as a whole and with individual sectors. In primarily vocationally oriented programmes, contact with working life is an integral part of teaching. Cooperation between schools and working life proceeds partly through the medium of joint vocational committees for these programmes. Some municipalities also have joint planning committees.

Owing to the wide range of interests and academic aptitudes among students entering upper secondary school immediately after compulsory school or later on, the work of each study route has to be adapted to individual students. The principal responsibility for the planning and implementation of teaching rests with the teacher. Students should, however, be able to influence the choice of content and teaching materials as well as teaching and working methods. Remedial teaching is offered in upper secondary school to students who are in need of extra help.

The pedagogical counsellor is the local level of information (see Section 2.3.2. and Box 1 for an example). A special State grant is provided for guidance courses within upper secondary school and adult education. A limited number of municipalities also receive support for basic adult education.

3.7. The role of public authorities at central, regional, and community levels

The government and social partners share the same view that 'people's knowledge and occupational skills constitute one of the decisive factors in the economy's productivity and growth' (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000, p. 14). Among results of the dialogue initiated in 1999 with the social partners, an agreement has been reached for which social partners – LO, the Swedish employers' confederation (SAF), TCO, SACO – have approached the government with a joint letter regarding the orientation of Sweden's action plan for 2000. The partners highlighted the need for a more differentiated and individual oriented labour market policy, the importance of education/training and skills development in working life, and the partners' own responsibility for employment.

Regional and local players are allowed to participate in the implementation of the policy, so that they can help to promote a high level of employment in their particular areas of responsibility. The employment services committees and the regional growth agreements constitute examples of such cooperation (see Section 2.2.). In work on the AEI, regional cooperation between training coordinators and trade unions has been positive, helping to

stimulate and motivate reluctant recruits to further education. This cooperation has now been extended to include local authorities, trade unions and local job centres.

In order to increase local influence, organised collaboration at local level was established in 1996 in the form of employment services committees, which consist of representatives of local authorities, local businesses and employee organisations. The task of the committees includes working to ensure that the labour market policy programmes are formulated on the basis of local criteria and needs within the framework of the national labour market policy, and creating a consensus between the various players (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000, p. 27).

Since 1 July 1998, the National Agency for Education has been responsible for organising and monitoring the work of the AEI. Project applications from the municipalities for upper secondary adult education are submitted to the agency, which decides on how the funds are to be allocated. Distribution of State grants for the AEI is based on three different criteria:

(a) unemployment and the level of education in each municipality;

(b) the direction and scope of the municipal programme in guidance courses, general courses and vocational courses;

(c) the quality of municipality programmes for renewal and development of adult education in the direction described above.

The State grant is submitted as a lump sum to the municipality. Using the grant, the municipality is meant to achieve its aims with regard to the direction, scope and quality of the education specified in its application to the National Agency for Education.

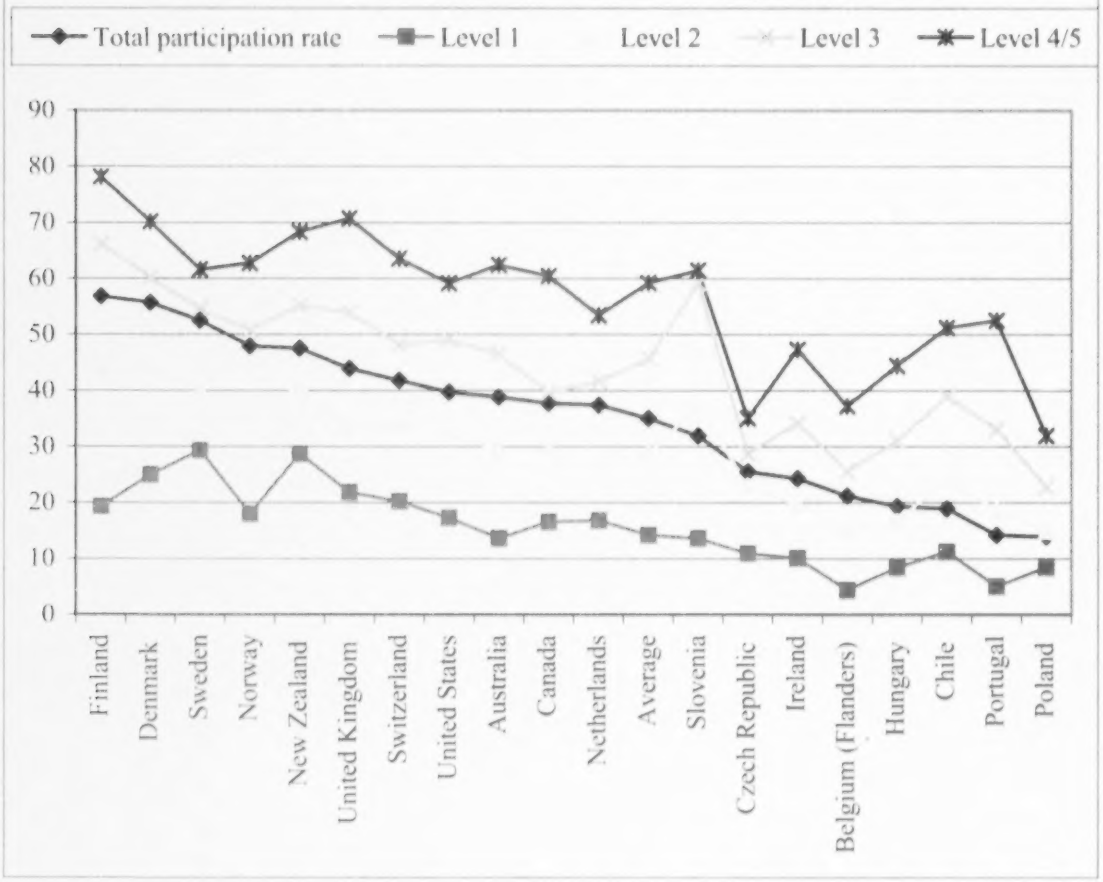
Local authorities are responsible for planning and running the programmes. They may, if they wish, cooperate with other local authorities or training providers. Each local authority is responsible for evaluating its own activities. The National Agency for Education monitors and evaluates the Komvux programmes regularly. There are many local examples of structures and networks (see Box 1 in Section 2.3.2. and Box 3 on the knowledge week in Section 3.6.1.).

3.8. The role of the enterprise: active policies to develop competence and human capital

Sweden has a high level of personnel training compared to other countries (see Graph 8), even considering low levels of literacy proficiency. There is, however, an uneven distribution of personnel training between groups. For instance, white-collar workers, middle-aged people and full-time workers receive a greater proportion of training than other groups (see OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000). Less personnel training is carried out in small companies than in larger companies and public authorities.

Graph 8 : Per cent of the population aged 16 to 65 participating in adult education and training during the year preceding the interview at each literacy level and in total, document literacy scale, 1994-98.

Graph 8: Per cent of population aged 16-65 participating in adult education and training during the year preceding the interview at each literacy level and in total, document literacy scale, 1994-98



Source: International Adult Literacy Survey, 1994-1998.

The government appointed an expert with the task of proposing a system for individual saving towards skills development. The expert will report on this proposal in January 2001 (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000, pp.14-23). To implement the scheme, the government will allocate more than SEK 1 billion (EUR 115 167 569) per year as a government stimulus under the form of tax subsidies.

Meanwhile, the government has allocated SEK 2.4 billion (EUR 276 402 165) to be spent between 2000 and 2002 within the framework of the European Social Fund's Objective 3. The European Social Fund's (ESF) Objective 3 in Sweden is aimed at skills development of employees. The skills development should be related to the business, and measures should be based on joint action plans or agreements between employers and employees. The action plans or agreements should be based on an analysis of the skills requirements in the organisation. Entrepreneurs can also be given a share of the funds.

3.9. Broad social projects

The social partners are aware of the crucial importance of knowledge development for growth. Hence, they have a close cooperation with all partners at both the local and central levels.

The TCO members work for example as engineers, teachers, police officers, secretaries, bank clerks and nurses, and can be found in both the public and private sectors. The TCO is an association of 18 unions representing the private, public and municipal sectors, totalling more than one million members. An important teachers' union is the Swedish Teachers' Union (*Lärarförbundet*). Another teachers' union is the Swedish Union of Folk High School Teachers (SFHL, *Folkhögskollärarnas förbund*). Both are affiliated with TCO. The LR is affiliated to SACO. The LR and *Lärarförbundet* collaborate on many issues, particularly on collective agreements. Other SACO affiliated teachers' unions are the Swedish Association of University Teachers and the Swedish Association of Head Teachers and Principals (*Skolledarna*). The LO and SACO are two other trade union confederations. The TCO and the LO have cooperated on international issues for many years.

The SAF consists of 45 000 large and small companies, organised in 39 employer associations. SAF has good expertise on labour market issues such as social security rules, pension systems and their effects on the efficiency of the economy. This expertise is also available to individual companies or employer associations. SAF has 20 regional offices located in different parts of Sweden. Each office also has representatives from different employer associations. Two issues have high priority locally:

(a) cooperation between businesses and schools;

(b) a smoother functioning local labour market.

3.10. Individual participation and awareness

Swedes have a long tradition of popular education. Furthermore, high rates of participation in adult education indicate that individuals are becoming aware of the importance of lifelong learning. This is also explained by the supply side, the special recruitment measures channelled through the trade unions, and the close link of popular adult education to popular movements.

Upper secondary education is seen as a right for all Swedes. The national targets for employment training, Komvux and State grants to popular adult education, as well as the focus on the individuals providing them with many choices of education and financial aid, assisted the increasing participation rates in adult education. The interest in employment sponsored training taken by the trade unions and the commitment to economic development by the government, the unions and the employers created a rich learning environment where literacy was practiced both in civil society and at work.

Furthermore, a positive attitude was created where more education made more advanced work organisations possible, which in turn created more opportunities to develop new skills and maintain old ones. Financially, adult education has not primarily been seen as an individual investment project. Most of the funding comes from the government or employers.

3.11. Lifelong learning and social inclusion of disadvantaged groups

3.11.1. The gender segregation

In 1996, the government gave the Swedish National Audit Office (RRV) the task of producing, from an equal opportunity perspective, an overview of the labour market policy measures at the disposal of the National Labour Market Administration (AMV). RRV's report shows that women and men generally participate in the measures in relation to their respective shares of unemployment. It does seem, however, that women and men obtain positions through these measures in occupations and sectors that are traditionally associated with the given gender. Available material also indicates that men participate in relatively expensive measures to a higher degree than women. These results indicate the necessity of integrating the gender perspective into all levels of labour market policy.

AMS has allocated the so-called 'breakthrough funds' to various equal opportunities projects. For the budget years 1997 to 1999, AMV was permitted to use up to SEK 30 million ((EUR 3 455 027) each year for project activities with the aim of breaking the gender segregated labour market and training its personnel in equal opportunities issues. Funds were distributed by AMS to county labour boards on application. From the budget year 1998 onwards, AMS chose to prioritise special development areas, mainstreaming gender in counselling, technology (a guidance programme in technology for women) and the training of more men as schoolteachers.

Men are over-represented in the IT sector, which has exceptional significance for the future labour market. The IT education and training currently on offer lacks an equal opportunities perspective and a gender-based approach. The transport sector also lacks a well-developed gender perspective. Therefore in autumn 1999, the government decided that a special council should be established for equal opportunities issues in the transport and IT sectors. The council's task will be to analyse and propose measures to increase equal opportunities in these sectors. On the basis of a survey of the IT industry presented in April 2000, the council noted that there is a low proportion of women participating in advanced IT education and training and the proportion is decreasing. In June 2000, the council submitted a preliminary proposal for measures to resolve the IT sector's equal opportunities problem (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications and Ministry of Finance, 2000, pp.11-12).

Women have a high employment ratio because of well-developed childcare and care of the elderly, and the right to parental leave and financial security during such leave. During the 1990s, a comprehensive development of childcare took place. Local authorities are obliged to supply pre-school activities or care for school children to the extent necessary, taking the parents' employment or studies or the needs of the child into account. Elderly care has been extensively developed since the 1970s. Very few elderly people live with their children. Coverage of the needs within both childcare and elderly care is today more or less complete.

At the same time, parental leave insurance will be extended by one month. Within the framework of this extended parental insurance, two months each will be reserved for the mother and the father. This means that an additional 'father's month and mother's month' will be included in parental insurance. For each child, an amount of 450 days for child care will be allocated. The mother and the father have 225 day each, which they can transfer to each other. Of the father's 225 days, 30 days are not transferable to the mother. Parental leave must be taken before the child is eight years old. There is a guaranteed amount of SEK 60 (EUR 7) per day if the parents have not been employed during the 240 days prior to the estimated time for

the birth of the child. There is no limitation on how many times parental insurance may be used. This is a right for parents and each of their children.

Statistics Sweden's latest report on women's and men's wages shows that women's wages as a % of men's wages are on average 82 %. The difference between women's and men's wages has increased somewhat since 1992. If age differences, education, working hours, sector and occupational group are taken into consideration, women's wages are 91 % of men's. Wage differences between women and men increase with age. In the 18 to 24 age group, women's wages are 92 % of men's whereas the corresponding figure for the 55 to 64 age group is 78 % (*ibid*, p. 7).

Among initiatives to promote gender equality, there are: (i) from 2000 onwards, a new technology programme will be introduced into upper secondary. The course content is designed to appeal to both women and men; (ii) the AE! has among other targets, one of increasing the percentage of women in education and vocational training by providing more guidance; (iii) in higher education, establishments have to report measures that have been taken to obtain a more equal gender distribution (*ibid*, 25).

3.11.2. Older population

The government intends to propose legislation that will give the choice to postpone the retirement age from 65 to 67 (ibid, p. 14). In order to stimulate participation in the labour force at an advanced age, it is important to create the criteria for employees to be able to continue to work beyond the age of 65. Such policy is implemented under intergenerational programmes that support old people in learning, i.e. through voluntary associations – such as the Seniornet association in Sweden – and in study circles (Boström, 2000). Seniornet is an association for people aged 55 years old and more who wish to learn and use the Internet. Their home page is www.seniornet.se. They started in 1996 and their goal is to make it easier for older people to use ICT. They cooperate with different stakeholders such as e-commerce companies and banks.

3.11.3. Adult education for people with mental disabilities

Särvux corresponds to the instruction provided for mentally disabled children in compulsory school and to vocational education in upper secondary school for young people with mental disabilities. Education is organised in the form of separate courses.

Municipalities are obliged to make an effort to provide educational opportunities corresponding to demand and individual needs. They are also obliged, in accordance with the School Act, to provide upper secondary education for young people with mental disabilities who are unable to attend an ordinary upper secondary school because of their disability. This education lasts four years and may be started up to the age of 20. For persons over 20, there are similar education programmes within adult education.

As in upper secondary school, the education is organised in terms of national programmes, which are basically adaptations of some of the corresponding vocationally oriented programmes at upper secondary school: arts; business and administration; handicraft; hotel, restaurant and catering; industry; media; natural resource use; and vehicle engineering. As at upper secondary school, the same core subjects are a part of all the national programmes, the difference being they have their own syllabi. In addition, 15 % of all teaching time is to be spent at the workplace.

Specially designed and IV programmes are also available (see Sections 2.3.1. and 2.4.1. about specially designed and IV programmes). There is within the IV programme scope for vocational and activity training.

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4. Curricular development, learning strategies and methodology

4.1. Pedagogical developments

4.1.1. Exploring new educational methods

The government has submitted a proposal to integrate experience from the AEI and KY projects – such as new methodology, learning strategies – within the adult education system (see section 3.4. on knowledge building).

4.1.2. A common curriculum for youth and adult upper secondary schooling

Upper secondary schooling for young persons and adults has a common curriculum with specific goals for each type of school. As in the new curriculum for compulsory schools, the goals stated in the curriculum for non-compulsory schools are of two kinds: goals that education should strive towards and those that everybody should be given the opportunity of achieving. The set of fundamental values which are to influence the activities of the school, and the demands imposed on students and school staff have been set out in six different sections: (i) knowledge and skills; (ii) norms and values; (iii) student responsibility and influence; (iv) head teacher's responsibility; (v) choice of education – working life; and (vi) grades and assessment.

The educational aims of the national programmes are set out in programme goals. The vocationally oriented programmes must give a broad basic education within the vocational field, as well as provide the foundation for further studies at post-secondary level. The national programmes and the national and local branches are built up from courses within different areas. A subject syllabus can consist of a number of short courses both within the programme selected as well as from other programmes. Course goals are set out in syllabi, which are common to upper secondary schools and Komvux. For basic adult education there are special programme goals and syllabi.

The curriculum is elaborated in the form of syllabi for each subject. The syllabi lay down the objectives for each course, and the skills and knowledge students are expected to have attained on completion of the course.

The education and training board of the municipal authority produces syllabuses for locally available courses. The purpose of a local course is to provide knowledge and skills in one or more subjects in a specific area of knowledge; a local course should only be made available where it satisfies needs which cannot be met by means of a national syllabus. For instance, one municipality has set up, within the energy programme, a course concerning European Union transport. In 1998, 123 municipalities set up 169 local courses for a total of 12 200 students (Skolverket, 2000a).

4.1.3. Learning in groups

Learning in groups is the method used by study circles, some classes in SFI, through the Swedish compulsory school system and for the problem-oriented learning method in upper-secondary schools – a method used for cross-curriculum-based problem learning.

4.1.4. Renewal of teachers skills

Since 1993/94, upper secondary school teachers of general subjects have four years' education, with two years in the main subject, one-and-a-half years for other subjects (two years for modern languages, Swedish, civics or artistic-practical subjects) and one year's training in the theory and practice of teaching. Upper secondary schools also have subject teachers with a Ph.D degree or similar qualification. Vocational training in upper secondary schools is provided by subject teachers with advanced economic or technical qualifications or by vocational teachers who have completed vocational training and studies in vocational theory. They have also acquired long experience of their trades and undergone teacher training at institutes of education. How upper secondary teacher training will look in the future is presently under discussion within the Ministry of Education and Science (Government Bill, 2000:135).

The major task for the in-service training of teachers in upper secondary school and Komvux is to supplement subject qualifications to bring them more in line with the qualifications needed in the new programmes within upper secondary education. The government has provided SEK 1.5 billion (EUR 172 751 353) to upgrade teachers' IT skills and it plans another initiative for 60000 teachers (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, and Ministry of Finance, 2000). The government is also making an important effort to upgrade teachers' skills. It has offered SEK 200 million (EUR 23 033 514) to upgrade teachers' skills and knowledge in special education concerning children with learning disabilities

Rubenson, Tuijnman and Wahlgren (2000) have raised questions regarding actual adult education teachers' qualifications. A necessary base to ensure future Swedish policy for adult education is successful, is to appoint teachers with the necessary qualifications so that teachers, staff and leaders in adult education can be professional in their work. It is understood that there is a need of future retraining in new pedagogic methods for teachers. The AEI committee together with the committee for teachers education have pointed out that need and they look upon adult education as a specialisation of general education. It is not enough to extend institutional education. Experience shows that existing qualifications among actors in the educational system should be connected to the processes of educational development including daily work-linked training and the use of information technology. Yet, it is pointed out that upgrading of the level of adult educators is also necessary by using universities as their resource for further training (Rubenson, Tuijnman and Wahlgren, 2000, p.79-80).

In order to give local authorities better criteria for meeting targets in the schools area, a total of SEK 500 million (EUR 57 583 784) has been allocated for development measures in schools during the period 2000-02. This includes an extensive drive for skills development of teachers within a number of strategic areas. Measures for pupils in need of special support will be given particular attention.

The government intends to produce proposals for increasing the guaranteed number of pupil teaching hours for all upper-secondary school programmes from 2001 onwards, to increase quality and achieve targets. The government has allocated funds for projects that aim to support and stimulate the development of each IV programme.

Flexible forms of teaching are based upon the overall teachers' skills quality. The government considers it important that upper-secondary school programmes are designed for both young people's interest areas and labour market needs, which require new teaching methods. As a consequence, measures to improve the quality of the schools system resulted in 1999 in a proposal for new teacher training for the public education system. All local authorities have

announced interest in participating and have applied for a government grant for infrastructure investment. Skills development has been organised as process-oriented on-the-job learning.

4.2. Implementation of the ICT

4.2.1. Computer availability in schools

In spring 1999, the National Agency for Education carried out for the fourth time a survey of the availability of computers in schools – other surveys were in 1993, 1995 and 1997. The number of pupils per computer – or computer density – has declined to 10 in primary, secondary and adult education schools (see Table 7). The computer density is highest in upper secondary schools or learning schools for the disabled – five students per computer. The geographical repartition between city and the countryside seems very equal: there are even more computers in sparsely populated areas. The number of computers connected to the Internet is quite unequal, from 11 % in independent schools for the disabled to 100 % in SSV.

Computers tend to be moved from the computer room to the classroom where they are used as a media. The increase – between 60 and 80 % of the computers are in the classroom – can be explained by the change in the national time schedule. The new time schedule has no special allocation for computer science as a subject; instead, computers are used as a tool in all subjects. The exception is in KOMVUX where computers are mostly – about 60 % – in the computer room. Most upper secondary programmes have special computer science subjects or courses that require all students of the same class to have access to a computer at the same time.

Table 7: Computers used in teaching (1999)

	School	Number of students per computer	Connected to the Internet	Connected to a local network
Primary-secondary (*grundskolan*)	Municipal schools	10	57	57
	Independent schools	10	57	60
	School for Sami	17	40	50
Upper secondary (*gymnasium*)	Municipal + county council schools	5	87	88
	Independent schools	3	91	93
Komvux	Local authority-administered schools	9	86	86
Learning disabled	Municipal + county council schools	4	37	32
	Independent schools	5	11	3
	Särvux	4	46	44
State-run schools	Special schools	3	92	90
	SSV	*	100	100

(*) Measurement not relevant.

Source: National Agency for Education (1999).

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The National Agency for Education also surveys the number of computers per teacher and their use. All teachers do not have a computer for their own use – especially at the primary and secondary levels (see Table 8). In primary and secondary schools, approximately two out of three teachers' computers are connected to the Internet, whilst in upper secondary and school for Sami, nine out of ten computers are connected.

Table 8: Computers for teachers' use only (1999)

	School	Number of teachers per computer	Connected to the Internet
Primary-secondary (*grundskolan*)	Municipal schools	6	69
	Independent schools	3	68
	School for Sami	2	*
Upper secondary (*gymnasium*)	Municipal + county council schools	1	89
	Independent schools	2	90
Komvux	Local authority-administered schools	7	87

(*) Measurement not relevant.

Source: National Agency for Education (1999).

The National Agency for Education survey has a final question on IT plans for the future. The increase compared to previous years shows that schools will continue to commit themselves more to investment in computers. Sweden has implemented the *European computer driving licence*: from 286 766 students who started the licence, 100 000 have passed it (ECDL, 2000, http://www.ecdl.dfs.se/).

4.2.2. Provision for distance education

The National Institute for Distance Education (NIDE) – which is directly under the Swedish Ministry of Education's supervision – is a supplement to Komvux and has provided distance learning opportunities for adults since 1956. Subjects offered are on a secondary or post-secondary school level mainly according to national curricula. NIDE also provides vocational training courses in areas such as electrical engineering, accountancy and nursing.

NIDE provides adult education for those who, for various reasons, cannot attend Komvux. It caters for students who wish to qualify for university studies, study on their own terms, study part time, concentrate on one subject at a time, have some kind of shift work, combine regular courses at Komvux with singular distance courses, live far from Komvux, are disabled, or for other reasons are unable to attend courses within Komvux.

NIDE has many partners in Komvux and is now being extended to the private sector by agreements with companies on programmes for competence development. NIDE had 17 800 course participants registered during 1999 and 130 staff members. In addition to the support students get from their tutors at NIDE, they can get support from a tutor at their local school, learning centre or learning centre at their workplace. Teaching material is supplied by NIDE. Communication between students and their tutors is carried out by letters, telephone and increasingly through ICT.

Since 1996, NIDE has a wider responsibility to develop study materials and methods for flexible learning based on the concept of distance education. In 1997, NIDE initiated cooperation with Komvux and companies in forming local study centres. A major goal is to encourage students to demonstrate initiative, critical thinking, innovation, risk taking and to be lifelong learners. The basic principle of the NIDE concept is to investigate the needs and goals of a customer before a plan is suggested. This includes, of course, thorough planning for each individual.

In 1998, the Swedish government decided to launch an initiative for developing new methods of distance learning for adults, based on ICT. A task force was set up to launch projects in this field for the development of new methods and support for flexible learning, with the assistance of the two SSV. The work is associated with developing support for accessible long-distance education organised by Komvux providers of upper secondary level education.

The government has appointed a special working group to make a link between local authorities' use of distance learning and the Swedish Agency for Distance Education (DATUM). DATUM was set up in 1999 with the aim to support and promote the development and application of distance education based on ICT. The agency's operations encompass universities and colleges, adult educational associations and folk high schools throughout the country. It allocates funds, follows up, evaluates, serves as a network-based information centre and exchange with other international bodies dealing with IT-based distance education projects (Distum, 2000).

Box 4: Another example of distance education adopted from OECD (1998b, p. 68-69):

The Forestry project, a cooperation project between employees, the trade union and employers of the Swedish forestry industry and a State educational organiser, the SSV, demonstrates how it is possible to develop and implement education for employees. The idea behind the project was born at the end of the 1980s when the SSV in Härnösand and *Skogsindustrins Utbildning AB i Markaryd*, organised education in operations and maintenance for personnel in shift-work. The result was very good and the course participants' willingness to pursue further studies was stimulated. Many course participants also realised that they would have managed the course with much better results if they had had better basic knowledge.

The aim of the project is to give shift-working personnel in the forestry industry education at upper secondary level in the core subjects of mathematics, chemistry, physics, Swedish and English. Tuition is carried out mainly through distance education and with the support of supervisors and new technology in the form of computers and interactive video. Education takes place mainly outside working hours, but in close connection to the workplace or home.

4.3. A great deal of recent fundamental shifts

As part of a general trend in Swedish society towards decentralisation of responsibility and decision-making powers, the education system has undergone fundamental changes in recent years.

In 1991, full mandate for all teaching staff was transferred from the central authorities to the municipalities and their local school authorities, which were also given undivided responsibility for organising and implementing school activities. The principles of school

management by objectives and results with fewer regulations and clearer goals were also laid down.

Another guiding principle of education policy has been to create a scope for diversity within the education system, and freedom for individual pupils and students to choose between different types of schools as well as between study routes.

A new division of responsibilities and functions within the Swedish education system is in force today, according to which parliament and the government control educational activities by defining national goals and guidelines for education. The central and local education authorities together with the different organisers are responsible for ensuring that the education system is organised in accordance with national goals. Within the framework and guidelines laid down by parliament and the government, the organisers enjoy considerable freedom to determine how activities are to be implemented and resources distributed and used.

The changeover to goal and result-oriented steering of the education system requires central and local authorities, as well as individual schools, to follow up systematically and evaluate educational activities in relation to goals and conditions applying to them.

The most important initiative in the adult education area in Sweden is currently being carried out by the AEI. Efforts by the trade unions in the form of active visits (see Section 2.2.5) have shown an increased interest in studies, reaching groups with low levels of education and motivation. These activities take place in collaboration with local authorities and education and training organisations. At the same time, a new form of advanced post-secondary vocational education (KY) is also being developed in close cooperation with the labour market.

5. Conclusions

In Sweden, there is large public investment in vocational training, with responsibility for VET delivery being divided between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Industry, Education and Communications. In fact, there are no definite boundaries between vocational and general education – essentially, it is an integrated system which became highly decentralised following the local government act of 1991. The decentralised Swedish education system allows municipalities to organise VET in different ways. Many of the municipalities share a joint responsibility for the various forms of adult education. Quality control is assured by three factors: goals and targets are fixed by the State – government and parliament; their implementation is the responsibility of the municipalities and individual schools; under the supervision and assistance of national agencies. This highly decentralised system often leads to a situation where the more the municipalities develop their decentralisation in the perspective of lifelong learning, the more the barriers and tracks are blurred. This situation makes the evaluators' task hard when it comes to generalise or specify the actions and the funding in Swedish VET.

Within the Swedish educational system, extensive examples of lifelong learning policy have been implemented. They may be summarised as follows:

- equal access for all and the scope for diversity is a fundamental guiding principle of education policy;
- within the upper secondary education system, students choose between 16 national programmes, of which 14 are vocationally oriented. The remaining two concentrate on preparing students for university studies;
- students with difficulties after compulsory education pursue personalised programmes such as the IV programme and the individual study plan;
- adult immigrants are integrated after a course in Swedish into school for adults;
- within the university framework, there is an interesting 24:4 rule, that is students should be above 24 years old in the academic year; and have been employed, at least half time for four years in order to be eligible to apply;
- the vouchers system gives students the freedom to choose their school, and schools have incentives to attract students;
- the AEI initiatives and KY programmes consist of new forms of training and they both aim at setting up new teaching methods, new educational providers and involve more actively employers and teaching providers. In particular, the KY programmes are other examples of how the lifewide perspective of learning takes place in Swedish VET where the formal learning acquired at school is combined with both non-formal and informal learning at the workplace;
- as part of the knowledge week, municipalities disseminate adult education information. The different actors and educational providers for the AEI have been organised under the supervision of a coordinator in each municipality. Such a network has created possibilities for the educational ministry to take action when proposing and supporting a knowledge week.

Swedish policy is actively supporting a lifelong learning perspective for VET. Below are some examples of such policy:

- increased use of ICT. A high level of computer literacy exists at both youth and adult levels – this is due to tax breaks for the use of computers at home and following the introduction of a new national time schedule in schools, there is no special allocation for computer science as a subject – instead computers are used as a tool in all subjects;
- increased possibilities of financing further VET for individuals. Companies mainly finance adult education, but a great deal of subsidies are granted by State study assistance on an individual basis. An individual study account may also be set up;
- increased possibilities for social partners to cooperate in arranging and implementing VET. Social partners are involved in adult learning by means of motivation visits to those reluctant to participate in further education.

Based on the above information, it can be asserted that Sweden is moving towards a genuine system for lifelong learning. Each year shows a State effort to invest further in a comprehensive system for education. A great deal of investment is planned between now and 2002 for the upgrading of teachers' skills, while a validation system for adults' knowledge and skills is under consideration. Moreover, there are generally high rates of participation in adult education initiatives which can take the form of study circles, folk high schools, Komvux, etc. Since 1975, the Educational Leave Act states that all employees are entitled to a leave of absence for studies, and the choice of study programme rests entirely with the individual. In terms of employment, women have a high employment ratio because of well-developed childcare facilities, support for care of the elderly and the right to parental leave.

Of course, according to what an ideal system for lifelong learning should be, Sweden does not invest enough and all characteristics are not set up yet – such as a full validation system for adult skills and knowledge – but the system is in a construction phase and could not be built at once. However, it is not clear how the different parts components of lifelong learning are building a homogeneous pathway.

Social partners involved in the knowledge week:

Almega
AMU-gruppen
Centrala Studiestödsnämnden - CSN
Distansutbildningsmyndigheten, DISTUM
Folkbildningsförbundet, FBF
Kunskapslyftskommittén, KLK
Kommittén för kvalificerad yrkesutbildning, KY committe
Landstingsförbundet, LF (Federation of Swedish County Councils)
Landsorganisationen, LO
Lärarförbundet
Lärarnas Riksförbund
Riksförbundet för kommunal vuxenutbildning, Rvux
Skolledarna
Sveriges Allmänna Biblioteksförening, SAB
Statens institut för särskilt utbildningsstöd, SISUS
Statens skolor för vuxna, SSV
Svenska vägledarföreningen
Nätverket för svensk yrkesvägledning, SYV
Utbildningsföretagens förening
UR
Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation, TCO

The 11 associations organising study circles

ABF	*Arbetarnas bildningsförbund*
FS	*Frikyrkliga studieförbundet*
FU	*XXX*
KFUK/M	*Kristliga Föreningen Unga Kvinnor/Män*
Mbsk	*Medborgarskolan*
NBV	*Nykterhetsrörelsens bildningsverksamhet*
Sfr	*Studiefrämjandet*
SISU	*Svenska idrottsrörelsens studieförbund*
SKS	*Sveriges kyrkliga studieförbund*
SV	*Studieförbundet, vuxenskolan*
TBV	*Tjänstemännens bildningsförbund*

AEI integrated with upper-secondary education for adults, autumn 1997 until autumn 1999

The extent of upper secondary school for adults can be measured in different ways, i.e. number of students, number of course participants and full-time study places.

Table: Age distribution autumn 1999

	19-24	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-
Total	8 593	44 557	35 922	34 521	30 265	22 444	15 399	10 146	6187
Number of men	3 512	17 978	12 178	10 285	8 349	6 037	4 255	2 841	2 235
Number of women	5 081	26 579	23 743	24 235	21 916	16 407	11 143	7 305	3952
Total (%)	4	21	17	17	15	11	7	5	3
Men (%)	5	27	18	15	12	9	6	4	3
Women (%)	4	19	17	17	16	12	8	5	3

Source: National Agency for Education (2000).

The table shows that the women in the upper secondary school for adults are older than the men. Only 50 % of the men are older than 30, 60 % of the women are older than 30.

In autumn 1997 the proportion of course participants with an educational background with not more than two year of upper secondary school, was 63 %, in autumn 1998 it was 70 % and in autumn 1999 it was 69 %.

Table: Educational background of the course participants

Educational background	Proportion of the course participants (%)		
	Autumn 1997	Autumn 1998	Autumn 1999
Unknown	1	1	2
Compulsory < 9 years	2	2	2
Compulsory 9-10 years	18	22	25
Upper secondary, <= 2 years	43	45	40
Upper secondary > 2 years	27	21	23
Higher education < 3 years	7	6	6
Higher education >= 3 years	3	2	3
Total	100	100	100

Source: National Agency for Education (2000).

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Table: Educational background of students, autumn 1999

Educational background	Proportion of students (%)		
	Total	Newly enrolled	Other students
Unknown	2	3	2
Compulsory < 9 years	2	2	2
Compulsory 9-10 years	22	25	20
Upper secondary, <= 2 years	37	31	40
Upper secondary > 2 years	24	24	23
Higher education < 3 years	9	9	8
Higher education >= 3 years	4	4	4
Total	100	100	100

Source: National Agency for Education (2000).

Legal provisions

ECDL: Education computer driving licence: www.ecdl.com/country/sweden.html

Europe: europa.eu.int

National Agency for Education: www.skolverket.se

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD: www.oecd.org

Svenska Institutet: www.si.se

Swedish Government: www. regeringen.se, Ministry of Finance, www.finans.regeringen.se, Swedish Ministry of Education and Science: www.regeringen.se/inenglish/index.htm, and www.utbildning.regeringen.se, Adult education initiative: www.kunskapslyftet.gov.se, Delegation for IT in school, ITiS: www.itis.gov.se.

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Lifelong learning in Sweden: The extent to which vocational education and training policy is nurturing lifelong learning in Sweden

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Lifelong learning in Sweden

The extent to which vocational education and training policy is nurturing lifelong learning in Sweden

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